PRINCE OF DARKNESS

MRS. SOUTHWORTH

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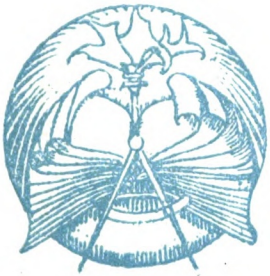

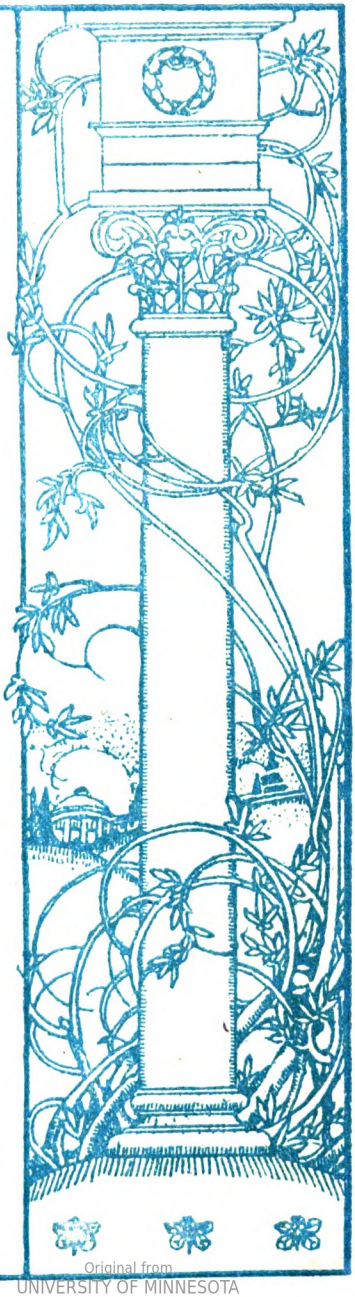

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THE
PRINCE OF DARKNESS

A ROMANCE OF THE BLUE RIDGE

BY

MRS. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of "Ishmael," "Self-Raised," "The Missing Bride," "A Beautiful Fiend," "How He Won Her," "A Noble Lord," "Tried for her Life," "Deserted Wife," "Fatal Marriage," "The Bride's Fate," "The Widow's Son," "Family Doom," "The Artist's Love," "Victor's Triumph," "The Curse of Clifton," "Spectre Lover," "Maiden Widow," "Fair Play," "Allworth Abbey," "Cruel as the Grave," "The Changed Brides," "Mother-in-Law."

Etc., Etc.

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THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS;

A ROMANCE OF THE BLUE RIDGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERY.

Is this the hall? The nettle buildeth bowers,
  Where loathsome toad and beetle black are seen!
Are these the chambers? Fed by darkest showers,
  The shiny worm hath o'er them crawling been!
  Is this the home? The owlet's dreary cry,
Unto that asking makes a dread reply!—NICOLI.

EARLY in the autumn of 18—, we were journeying leisurely through the majestic and beautiful mountain and valley scenery in the interior of Virginia.

It was near the close of a golden October day that we reached the picturesque little village of Hillsborough, situated upon a very high point of land, and in the midst of abrupt, rocky, tree-capped peaks, with green dents of fertile soil between. It was a town of rocks—founded upon rocks—hemmed in by rocks—the dwelling-houses, out-houses, fences, pig-pens, chicken-coops, all built of rocks of every conceivable variegated hue. It was, indeed, a beautiful and brilliant piece of mosaic work, up and down a ground of shaded green. It was as radiant and many colored as the forest in autumn, and flashed and sparkled in the golden sun like an open casket of jewels.

We reached the quaint old inn in time for a late dinner. There we expected to meet the carriage of a friend who resided at a farm about five miles distant across the mountains, and at whose house we were go-

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ing to spend a few weeks. We found our friend, Mrs. Fairfield, waiting for us, and as soon as dinner was over we set out for Cedar Cliffs. Our road lay west through a savagely beautiful country, breaking itself up toward a lofty range of blue mountains encircling the western horizon, and behind which glowed and burned the crimson sunset sky.

We approached the celebrated pass of the Bear's Walk, from the highest point of which an extensive view of the valley was afforded. As we began to ascend the mountain, I fell into one of those indolent, pleasant, but rather selfish reveries, which the gathering shadows of twilight, the darkening scene, and the heavy, sleepy motion of the carriage, seemed to invite. From this reverie I was at length aroused by my indulgent companion, who, laying her hand upon my arm, and pointing across me through the window on the right, said,

"I wish you to observe that house."

We had just slowly reached the summit of the mountain, and the carriage had stopped to breathe the horses. I looked out at the window on the right. It was yet early enough in the evening, and there was light enough left to see, pitching precipitately down below us, a flight of cliffs, the bases of which were lost in abysses of twilight gloom and foliage, and the circular range of which swept round in a ring, shutting in a small, but deep and cup-shaped valley. Down in the deeps of this darkening vale loomed luridly a large old farmhouse of red sandstone. The prevalent tone of the picture was gloom. Down into a reverie about the deep, dark vale, and darker house, swooped my fancy again. The carriage was in slow motion. I drew in my head.

"Did you notice the house?"

"Yes; and through that deep sea of dark and floating shadows, itself the densest shadow, it looms like some phantom, some ghost of a dead home——"

"Say a *murdered* home."

"I wish you wouldn't break a well-rounded sentence

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with any sort of improvement—ghost of a dead home about to melt away again in the surrounding gloom."

"Well said—better even than you think. Yet that old, half ruined farmhouse is the center of one of the largest, most beautiful, fertile, highly-cultivated, and productive estates in all Virginia. If you saw it under the noonday summer sun, you would see a variegated ground-view of vast fields of wheat and rye, yellow and ripening for the harvest; corn, green, waving in the sun; red-blossomed clover, pastures of blue grass rolling down the sides of the hills behind us, and stretching out on all sides of the old house, and disappearing under the bow of the circular-bounding of mountains. You hear now the mellowed tinkle of a waterfall, which, springing from the cliffs we have just left, flows down the sides of the rocks, and reaching the bottom of the cup-like vale, spreads itself into many little, clear rills, well watering its fertile fields, red pasturage, and heavy woods. This estate, with its fine water, its wealth of iron ore and coal in the encircling mountains, its abundance of game in the forest and fish in the river, and its immense water-power, is one of the most valuable in the Southern States. Yet in the midst of that wealthy and highly-cultivated plantation stands the homestead itself a desolation!"

"Then the shadowy view of it is after all the best. Now that you have directed attention to this dark phantom of a home looming luridly from the deep shadows, I warrant that we shall hear you say that this uncouth jumble of rough hewn red sandstone and miscellaneous rubbish is no less a place than Lingston Lawn, Pomfret Park, or some other style of sonorous sound."

"No—it is only Hickory Hall."

"Oh, yes! one of the oldest mansion-houses in the States—the residence, since 1610, of the oldest branch of the Lingstons, the Doverfields, or some other great family, with nothing left but their great name and great need."

"On the contrary, Hickory Hall is only the home of

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the Wallravens, and has been so for only a hundred years."

"Exactly—precisely—I said that. Hickory Hall, for upward a hundred years, the seat of the Wallravens, an old family, with nothing left but their old name. And now I understand why the homestead is in ruins, while the farm is in the highest state of cultivation."

"Why, I pray you?"

"I will undertake to say that all these well-cultivated fields, rolling in richness from hence to the horizon, belong to an 'industrious, intelligent and enterprising' Yankee purchaser and settler, who came here some five or six years ago peddling mouse-traps, and has now become possessed of all this land, and whose substantial, square-built, red brick house stares one out of countenance somewhere over yonder by the side of the main road leading to market."

"Wrong again. Hugh Wallraven is one of the wealthiest, if not the very wealthiest man in Virginia. His fortune is estimated, with what truth I know not, at one million."

"Possible! I did not think there was such a private fortune in the country."

"It is said to be true, however."

"One million! why in the world, then, does he not put up a decent house? A decent house! Good! why does he not erect upon this favored spot a palace of white marble, with terraces, conservatories, pleasure gardens, fountains, groves? Fill his palace with the most beautiful and perfect work of mechanism, in the way of furniture, to be procured in Europe and Asia—with the rarest works of art of ancient or modern times—his conservatories with the richest exotics of all climes,—his gardens with the finest vegetables—his orchards with the utmost perfection of fruit? If I were he, with one million of dollars, I would introduce every new improvement in farming, grazing, stock breeding—I would import the best specimens of cattle, horses, poultry. I would have Welsh ponies, Scotch

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draft horses, English hunters, and Arabian coursers. Oh! I would make myself and so many other people so happy! One million! Oh! stop—don't speak to me yet—just let me revel in the idea of one million to lavish on this magnificent spot."

"Why, you unsophisticated little blockhead!"

"But why then does not this Mr. Wallraven—or rather, Judge Wallraven, or General Wallraven—for I never heard of a planter, of any importance, reaching a certain period of life, without some title of distinction—why does not Governor Wallraven do something with one million?"

"He has done something—his farm is the best cultivated in the State."

"Yes! but it should be the best stocked—the best in every particular—the model farm."

"Mr. Wallraven is a very aged man."

"Ah! he is *Mr.*, then."

"Of course. People do not confer honors of any sort upon men like him!"

"Men like him! He is a bad man, then? perhaps a criminal, whose immense wealth and powerful family connections have enabled him to cheat the State prison of its due!"

"Mr. Wallraven has never been charged with or even suspected of, a crime——"

"In his own proper person. 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children.' His father, perhaps——"

"Possessed a name that was a synonym for high honor and sterling integrity—his son, with his name, has inherited his reputation and character of strict truth and honesty."

"Ah! that is it, then! He does not cheat at cards, and therefore he has not won any of the prizes in the game of life. But to return to my first question. Why does not Mr. Wallraven, of the sterling integrity, and the pounds sterling, do something?"

"He is the best agriculturist in the State—it is his ruling passion—his occupation."

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"And he lives in a wretched, old, ruinous house? Why doesn't he improve his place?"

"Pertinacious! He is an aged man of sixty years."

"Yes! I see! And he has no children—that circumstance paralyzes his energies even more than old age!"

"How you jump to conclusions! He has a son and daughter!"

"Hum—hum—ah! well, sixty years old! His son and daughter must themselves be married, and settled off, and have children—and so, at last, he is a solitary old man, with no motive for improving and embellishing his homestead—the old house, it will keep out the rain, is quite good enough, he thinks, for the short life of the solitary old grandfather."

"Utterly wrong! His children, though past their early youth, are both still single.

I paused for a moment and then a luminous idea lighted up the whole subject and I exclaimed, triumphantly:

"Now I have it! Now I certainly have it! He is one of those unnatural monsters, a miser. Of course! why, surely! Why did I not see it at once? How it explains everything that was difficult to understand now! How clear that answer to the enigma makes all obscurity! How consistent all seeming contradictions! He is a miser! That does not prevent him being a man of strict honesty, sterling integrity—yet, most certainly, he is a miser; and 'people do not confer titles of distinction upon men like him!' Yes, he is a miser! That is the manner in which he has amassed his immense property! That is also the reason why his house is suffered to fall to ruins while his farm is well cultivated—the farm will make returns, but the house will not. He has also half starved, half clothed, and half educated his children. They have grown up coarse, uncouth, ignorant, unfit for good society. They are consequently not well received, and even if they were disposed to marry, he would not portion his daughter, or establish his son in business. That is the answer

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to the whole enigma! Now say that I have no quickness of apprehension!"

"Wonderful!"

"Ah! I have my inspirations sometimes!"

"Stupendous!"

"You are making fun of me!"

"Hem! listen. His son, Constant Wallraven, graduated at a Northern University, and made the grand tour of the Eastern continent, accompanied by a clergyman salaried to attend him. You never saw a handsomer or magnificent looking man, or one of more perfect dress and *ad*-dress—the 'courtier's, scholar's, soldier's eye, tongue, sword.' His daughter, Constantia Wallraven, is one of the most beautiful and elegant of women, with one of the best cultivated minds I ever met."

"You surprise and perplex me more and more—handsome, accomplished, wealthy, in the prime of life, and have never been married? but perhaps it is they that are cold?"

"Not so. They have ardent temperaments and warm affections."

"Then they are, take them all in all, not easily matched, and of course, they are fastidious!"

"I think not; I am sure not! for, listen again, some years ago Constant fell in love with the beautiful daughter of a poor day-laborer—a poor, miserable fellow who hired in harvest, or in very busy times, to work in the field with the negroes."

"Ah! now it comes!"

"Constant wished to marry her."

"Well?"

"He offered himself to the girl."

"Well?"

"And the poor, abjectly poor, father threatened to shoot the son of the millionaire if he caught him near his hut again."

"The poor father could not believe in his daughter's good fortune. He suspected the young man of evil designs?"

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"Possibly. If he did him that wrong, he was quickly undeceived—for the very next day Hugh Wallraven, the father, called at the hut of the poor day-laborer, and asked the hand of his young daughter, Ellen Dale, for his son and heir; and the poor man, with a blush of indignation, *refused* it!"

"You astonish me!"

"Hugh Wallraven then offered to settle fifty thousand dollars on the maiden, if her father would permit the match; and the pauper father refused!"

"You astound me! You positively do! What could have been the poor man's motive—enmity?"

"No! the poor creature wept bitterly while refusing his daughter to the son of his best friend and patron—and such was Hugh Wallraven to Thomas Dale."

"Perhaps this Constant Wallraven was a love-child, and the poor but honest and sternly correct father of a family upon that account despised and rejected the alliance!"

"Did I not say Hugh Wallraven had never been charged or even suspected of crime or vice? No! Constant was the son of his marriage; and here it is well to inform you that the father for his whole life, and the children from an early age, have been members in good standing—for persons in their condition—of the Protestant Episcopal church. If ever a family lived up to a Christian standard, it is the Wallravens."

"And yet, notwithstanding their wealth, intelligence and piety, the poorest day-laborer, who is bound to them besides by a debt of gratitude and love, will not ally with one of his family!"

"Even so."

"What can be the reason of this proscription? some horrible hereditary affliction. Yes! that must be it—insanity perhaps!"

"Worse far than that!"

"Blindness!"

"Infinitely worse than that!"

"Some loathsome disease such as we read of in the East—leprosy!"

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"Worse even than that, or any disease, or any sin, is this one incurable, fatal family calamity!"

"Come, there is a story connected with this doomed family—this dark phantom of a dead home——"

"Of a *murdered* home, as I said before. Yes, there is a dark, dreadful story—a domestic tragedy!"

"Will you tell it to me?"

"Yes—or rather you shall know it! It is inevitable that you should hear it—perhaps an unjust version of it, and as one very, very near and dear to me is intimately connected with the whole affair, in justice to him you shall have the truth. We are near Cedar Cliffs now. In a few minutes we shall reach the house."

It was dusk.

There is something mysteriously pleasing to me in approaching in the dusk of the evening a strange country house, in which I expect to stay awhile.

As the carriage stopped before the house about to become our temporary home, we looked out with vague interest and curiosity in the blackness of the night; but we could discover nothing but indistinct and shadowy shapes, suggestive of a massive dwelling-house, with out-buildings, and trees, and hills, and a back-ground of lofty mountains, looming dark, darker, and darkest, into the murky sky. There was such an absorbing obscurity swallowing up everything. There was such a shadowy interest—such a stimulus to curiosity—such a field for imagination in all so vague and undefined. It is the charm of the unknown—the glamour of the *terra incognita*, that attracts us.

It seems like dream-land—like childhood come back. And then there is the cheerful anticipation of exploring the new scenes, by daylight, to-morrow, after breakfast, of which we think now, and of which we shall dream to-night. We are just agreeably chilly, hungry, and tired enough to anticipate thorough enjoyment from the glowing fire, the hot supper, and the soft bed that shortly awaits us; and curious enough to wonder in detail what each will be like.

At the end of a long journey, commend me to an

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arrival at a country house at dark, where every sort of comfort will be enhanced by the most affectionate welcome. Gently pleasing fancies and feelings, like these, half forgotten childish emotions of wonder and curiosity about small things, possessed my mind, chasing from it completely all dark and weird imaginings awakened by the Phantom House in the Vale of Solitude.

Almost immediately after the carriage stopped, we saw a light glancing behind the closed Venetian blinds of the house, and immediately the front door opened, and a lantern emerged and came to meet us, followed by a long, dark shadow that flitted, fantastically, hither and thither, behind it. It was Gullivar, the old gardener, who opened the gate and assisted us to alight. Mary (Mrs. Fairfield) gave us in charge of a colored chambermaid, who conducted us to a pleasant bedroom, fragrant with the smell of dried herbs, and agreeably warmed by a bright and cheerful fire.

Soon as we had bathed and changed our clothes, Mary came and conducted us down to supper in one of those comfortable and agreeable rooms that young and tasteful housekeepers are so fond of perfecting. A coal fire glowed redly through the polished steel bars of a large grate, the bright light of a solar lamp, standing upon the tea-table, flashed down upon an elegant tea-service of chased silver and white china arrayed upon a snowy damask cloth. It was an enviable room indeed.

By the side of the fire, in a spring-bottomed armchair, sat a gentleman whose appearance instantly interested me. He was of medium height, of slight, but elegant figure, and his fair, wan complexion, spiritual countenance, and golden locks,

"Did a ghastly contrast bear"

to the black hue of his mourning dress. This gentleman arose with a languid grace, and came to receive us; and when Mary named me to "Mr. Fairfield," her husband, he welcomed me with easy kindness.

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We then took our places at the table. It was impossible, however, not to observe the expression of profound, incurable sorrow upon the countenance of this young man. It was impossible not to wonder how Mary herself could preserve any remnant of cheerfulness by the side of this heart-crushing despair. It seemed too deep, too great to leave him a thought of struggling against it, or concealing it. Yet, habitual politeness, feelings of hospitality or benevolence, made him very kindly attentive to me; and I never saw anything so sad, so moving to tears, as his smile. Indeed, I was already beginning to be painfully, strongly, interested in this young gentleman—more strongly than I like to be in man, woman, or child, over whose destiny I can exert no control for their happiness. And when I turned from his wan, spiritual countenance, to that of Mary, at the head of the table, I thought that her happy, youthful face, so full of health, intelligence, and cheerful *bonhommie*, must exercise a wholesome if an unseen, influence upon her suffering companion.

An accident that occurred that evening, further excited my wonder and interest. We had left the supper-table, which was cleared away, and gathered around the fire, which had been replenished, and glowed brightly, when a knock at the front-door was heard, and soon after the parlor-door was opened, and an old man stood within it.

He was very tall, very broad-shouldered; but stooping, either with sorrow or infirmity. He was clothed in deep mourning—his left hand leaned heavily on a stout, gold-headed cane, while with his right hand he tremblingly lifted from his venerable head his hat, which he held in his hand, revealing by the action a brow, plowed deep by sorrow or remorse, and hair white as the driven snow. There was an air of deep humiliation, of piteous deprecation, in his whole manner and appearance, most painful to witness in one so aged, and, in every other respect, so venerable. Neither Mary nor Mr. Fairfield arose to receive this visitor nor, by look or gesture showed any sort of respect for him

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—only Mary looked sadly down at her hands, and Mr. Fairfield said kindly, but gravely,

"How do you do, Mr. Wallraven?"

"Mr. Wallraven!" thought I, giving a covert, but piercing glance, to the aged and stopping figure standing, hat in hand, so deprecatingly at the door.

"Ferdinand, she is dying at last—come to her, she is dying!" he said.

"Dying!" echoed Mary.

"Thank God!" fervently exclaimed Mr. Fairfield, with the first look of hope I had yet seen on his wan face.

"Yes, dying. Will you come?" repeated the old man, as he trembled over his staff. "Will you come?"

"Assuredly. Mary, love, order the carriage. Dying at last. Thank God"

Mary had hastily left the room, and soon returned with his cloak and hat.

Fairfield quickly donned them, and, accompanied by the old man, left the house.

After they had gone, Mary Fairfield walked about in a state of half-suppressed excitement such as I had never seen her betray. She seemed to have forgotten me altogether, for which I could not blame her. Presently, suddenly stopping, she asked, "Dear, are you tired?"

Feeling myself really fatigued and somewhat *de trop*, I answered "Yes."

"I will attend you to your room," she said, and taking up a candle that she herself had left burning on the side-table, when she came in with Mr. Fairfield's cloak, she preceded me up-stairs, and into my room, where we found the fire still burning, and a negro girl waiting.

"You may go, Blanche," said Mrs. Fairfield to the woman, who immediately left the room; and then, "I can unhook your dress, dear," she kindly said to me.

"I wished to try her, to see whether she was really concerned at a circumstance, for which she had just

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thanked God so fervently. I turned suddenly, and squeezing her hand heartily, said,

"Mary, I have half fallen in love with your husband—do you care?"

"Oh! darling, don't jest. He is ill—his constitution has received a severe shock—he is heart-broken."

And now I saw by her countenance that a great deal of her cheerfulness and *bonhommie* in his presence was nothing more than self-control.

A violent knocking at the front door summoned her in haste from the room. It was about fifteen minutes before she returned. She was bonneted and cloaked for a journey, and she held in her hand a large old letter.

"They have sent the carriage back for me, dear," she said. "I shall probably be absent all night, but you are at home you know. Blanche will attend to all your orders—and, dear, here is a letter. It is one that Ferdinand wrote to me on the eve of our engagement—he called it his confessions. It is only his explanation of certain dreadful circumstances that troubled me before our marriage, and that trouble you now. I have Ferdinand's consent to leave it with you. Read it. It will tell you all you wish to know. It will engage you during my absence, and, when I return, you will know—the end!"

She kissed me and was gone.

I had been very tired and sleepy; but there was no sleep for me then until I had read the manuscript. I trimmed my fire—drew a candle-stand to my side—and, with my feet upon the fender, opened the manuscript that was to let me into the secret of the "Phantom House."

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CHAPTER II.

WOLFGANG WALLRAVEN.

His face is dark, but very quiet;
It seems like looking down the dusky mouth
Of a great cannon.—JOHN STERLING.

Heed him not, though he seem
Dark and still and cold as clay,
He is shadowed by his dream
But 'twill pass away.—BARRY CORNWALL.

I DO not know what was the power that attracted me so strongly, so inevitably, so fatally, to Wolfgang Wallraven: whether it was magnetism, sorcery, or destiny—or whether it was the gloom and mystery of his manner and appearance. Certain it is that there was a glamour in his dark and locked-up countenance and in the smouldering fierceness of his hollow eyes that irresistibly drew me on to my fate. He did not seek my acquaintance—he sought the society of no one. On the contrary, he withdrew himself into solitude—into surliness. This was unusual in a schoolboy, and it made him very unpopular. To me, however, his sullen reserve and surly manner had more interest, more fascination, than the openest and blandest demonstrations of social affection from any of the other boys could have. There was evidently something behind and under it. He was not all outside. Perhaps he piqued my curiosity, or interested some feeling more profound than mere curiosity. I inquired about him.

"Who is he? Where did he come from?"

"We call him the Prince of Darkness! Oh! he is a haughty fellow. The eldest son and heir of an immensely wealthy Virginian. You can't make anything of him; let him alone," was the answer.

I turned my eyes on him. He was sitting at his distant desk—a single, solitary desk in the farthest corner of the schoolroom. His elbow leaned upon

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his desk—his brow supported upon his left palm—his eyes bent upon the book lying open before him—his dark, rich locks hanging over his fingers.

"Why does the professor give him that distant, single desk, apart from all the other boys? Seems to me that would make him unsocial."

"Why? It is his choice. The young prince is an aristocrat, and does not choose to sit upon a form and mix with other boys. I say you had better let him alone. You can do nothing with him."

I looked at him again and more attentively. There was more suffering than scorn revealed in the charming curves of his mouth—a mouth that would have been perfectly beautiful, had not the lips been too closely compressed and the corners too sadly declined. I gazed at him under the influence of a sort of fascination. Yes, there was more sorrow than hauteur darkly written upon that young regal brow. My heart warmed, glowed toward him with a mysterious and irresistible sympathy that compelled me to saunter toward him. (This was in the recess between the morning and afternoon sessions, a period which—with the exception of a few minutes at the dinner table—he always spent at his solitary studying desk.) I sauntered toward him slowly—for I felt in some degree like an intruder—engaged in opposite and contradictory thoughts and feelings. My intellect was seeking to explain the mystery of his solitude and reserve, and to excuse my own intrusion, by this reasoning.

"He is the eldest son and heir of an immensely wealthy Virginian planter. He is of an old, haughty family, and has been accustomed to 'sovereign sway and masterdom' all his life. He is now, however, in a genuine republican school—thank heaven all our schools, academies, and colleges are republican—and he finds himself in a mixed company of sons whose fathers peddled needles and thread about the town, and whose mothers sold apples under the trees, and made fortunes at it; and, with his senseless and anti-republican, Virginian hauteur, he thinks himself above

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these, and withdraws himself from them. Ah! I know these proud, aristocratic Virginians well. My haughty uncle was a Virginian, and emigrated to Louisiana. Upon the part of his school-mates, some are proud as himself, and will not make unwelcome advances; while some are only vain and conceited, ashamed of the newness of their wealth, sore upon that point, secretly honoring old respectability, and fearful of being suspected of courting it, will not seek the acquaintance of this young aristocrat, lest they be so misunderstood. With me, however, it is different. Myself descended from Lord B——, Governor of Colonial Virginia—the possessor of a handsome patrimonial estate in Alabama, when I shall come of age—and the heir apparent of an immense sugar plantation and several hundred resident negroes—I need not fear to approach this young gentleman upon at least an equal feeling."

So I reasoned, as I said, to account for his reserve, and to excuse my own intrusion. But my feelings utterly revolted against my thoughts. My head might think what it pleased, but my heart felt certain that pride of place had nothing to do with the surliness of the strange, lonely boy. As I drew near him I felt a rising embarrassment—a difficulty in addressing him to whom I had never yet spoken one word. Suddenly a bright idea was inspired. I had by chance my "Thucydides" in my hand. I approached his lonely desk, opened my book, and said,

"Mr. Wallraven, I have a favor to ask of you. I am in a difficulty about a Greek particle. If you assist me I shall feel under a very great obligation."

Never shall I forget the effect of his picturesque attitude and expression of countenance as I stood by him. His form was turned from me, and towards the corner window against which his desk sat. He was leaning, as I said before, with his elbow on the desk—his head on his hand, the fingers of which were lost amid dark, glossy locks which drooped over his temples and side-face, concealing his face at first from me; but, as I spoke, he quickly, as a startled raven, turned

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his head, and gave me a quick, piercing glance from his light-gray, intensely bright eye—a glance dilating as it gazed, until it blazed like broad sheet lightning upon me. I had always thought his eyes dark until now. His skin was so sallow—his hair, his eyebrows, his sweeping eyelashes, such a jetty resplendent black that dark eyes were taken for granted. When now, however, he raised the deep veils of those long, black, sweeping lashes, light-gray Saxon eyes, of that insufferable white fire, that vivid lightning, at once so fierce and so intense that none but Saxon eyes possess, flashed broadly forth upon me. He did not reply to me at first. I repeated my request. He silently took the book, examined the indicated passage, presently solved the difficulty, and returned the volume to my hand. As I received it and thanked him, I said,

"Mr. Wallraven, we stand in the same class every day. I trust we shall become better acquainted."

He looked at me inquiringly.

"You know my name. I am the son of the late Governor Fairfield, of Alabama, formerly of Fairfax county, Virginia. You, being of that State, probably know something of that family, or of the B——s, who are connections."

"Yes, I have heard of the Fairfields of Fairfax, and I know the B——s by reputation."

"Very well! Now you know who I am, I shall be glad to cultivate your acquaintance, hoping that we may be friends," said I, thinking surely that I had made a favorable impression upon the queer, difficult boy.

I was undeceived, however, when, with a dry "Thank you," he dropped the light of his beaming eyes again upon his book. I almost fancied I saw two bright spots on the page, like reflections cast from a sun-glass. There was nothing farther for me to do than to turn and leave him. The school-bell also summoned us at that moment to our afternoon studies.

My attraction to, my affection for that strange boy was rising almost to the height of a passion. Never

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did a lover desire the affections of his sweetheart more than I did the friendship and confidence of my queer outlandish classmate. Never did a lover scheme interviews with his mistress more adroitly than I planned opportunities of conversing with Wolfgang, without seeming to obtrude myself upon him.

I felt as if notwithstanding his extreme youth, his rank, and his pride, he was by some circumstance an object of compassion—but respectful compassion—as if, notwithstanding his handsome person and fine intellect, he was in reality suffering in heart and brain; and I felt as if, notwithstanding his proud reserve with me, I was his necessary medicine. I felt upon the whole not disappointed with his reception of me. At least the ice of non-intercourse was broken, and I might at any time go to him with a Greek exercise and ask his assistance, which was certain to be lent, and at each interview some little progress was sure to be made. It was true that I really never did need his assistance—my classic attainments being good as his own—as he might have known, had he taken the trouble to think about me at all; but that appeal to his benevolence was the only manner in which it was possible successfully to approach a haughty, reserved, but noble and generous nature, such as I felt his to be—one, too, so determinedly bent upon solitude. What slow progress I made, good heavens! At the end of six months our acquaintance had scarcely progressed beyond occasional conversations, commencing with a Greek root. This was, however, much more ground than any other boy held in his good graces.

At the end of the winter session, a very handsome traveling-carriage, with the Wallraven arms painted on its panels, drawn by a pair of splendid black horses, a well-dressed colored coachman, and a smart out-rider, arrived to convey Wolfgang Wallraven away. I thought—nay, I am sure that he betrayed some emotion at parting with me. He went, and I also made hasty preparations to return by stage and steamboat to my distant home in Alabama, where I longed to

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meet again my lovely and beloved young sister, Regina.

The end of the Easter holidays brought me back to school. There, shortly after my arrival, came Wolfgang Wallraven. He was more gloomy, surly, and solitary, than ever, to all the other boys; of me, however, he was more tolerant. Indeed, in the course of a month or so, our acquaintance began to take the form of intimacy; and as his character began to develop itself to my view, never, I think, did I meet, in life or in books, so strange a being. If I had before been inclined to favor the philosophy of the dual mind, I should then have been in danger of being a convert to that theory. Two natures met, but did not mix or blend in him—two natures as opposite and antagonistical as were his fierce light-gray Saxon eyes and the sweeping jet-black lashes, brows and hair. If any one trait of character stood distinctly out one day, it was certain that its very opposite, in all its strength, and even excess of strength, would reveal itself the next.

As his heart gradually, very gradually, unfolded itself to me—or rather to my sympathy, he would occasion me a succession of surprises, and even shocks—pleasing, painful, ecstatic, agonizing, according to the nature and power of new, opposite, and unexpected traits.

He possessed the highest order of talent, but exhibited a very erratic application. If, for one week, he applied himself concentratively to his studies, the next week he would be sure to throw aside his books, and pass into the most *distrait ennuyée*, and despairing mood conceivable, from which no remonstrance, no reproof, of the master professor would arouse him.

As time went on, I still made slow, but certain progress in his affections; little and very precarious ground I held in his confidence; though still in his manner to me, as in everything else, he was inconsistent, contradictory, incomprehensible and, often astounding. If, upon one occasion, he would treat me with unusual warmth and kindness, upon the next he would be sure to freeze up in the most frigid reserve.

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He was, indeed, a combination of the most discordant elements. As I became intimate with him, I witnessed the most stupendous metamorphoses of character. A sovereign, overmastering haughtiness would alternate with a slavish, almost spaniel-like humility; a fierce and wolfish moroseness of temper give place to an almost womanish tenderness. I confidently, logically expected the time when this frozen ice of his reserve would thaw, and drown me with his confidence; on one particular occasion I felt sure it was coming.

I went to his room after school, by appointment. I saw the boy who distributed, or rather carried around the letters through the house, coming down the stairs as I was going up, and, pausing only long enough to take the letter for myself from him, I hurried on, intending then to excuse myself to Wolfgang, and retire to my room to read my letter, which I saw was from my sister. But as I approached his room, the sound of suffocating sobs reached me, and, throwing open the door, I went in and found Wolfgang sitting at his writing-table, his arms extended upon it, his head down upon them, abandoned to the utmost agony of sorrow.

I never shed a tear in my life. I saw my beloved mother, my adored father, die, and I suffered the extremity of bereavement and grief, but never wept, or felt disposed to weep; therefore it was dreadful to see a tear in a boy's eye, and here was Wolfgang lost, convulsed with anguish; and sobs and sighs, such sobs and sighs as rive the heart in their passage, bursting from his bosom; and copious tears, such tears as scald like molten lead, wherever they drop, falling from his burning eyes. I saw, yet scarcely saw, an open letter on the floor. My heart sank within me, to see him so violently shaken with agony. I went to him scarcely knowing whether, in his uncertain mood, he would throw himself into my arms, or knock me down. I went to him, and stooping and speaking low, said,

"Wolfgang, my dearest Wolfgang, what is this? Can I in any way comfort or assist you?"

I confess that I was surprised when he turned and

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fell weeping upon my bosom in the very collapse of mortal weakness, murmuring,

"Yes—yes; comfort me if you can. I am weak—weak as a child—weak as an infant. Oh! hold me—comfort me—love me! Love me, if you can."

I set myself to soothe him. I spent some time seeking to console and sustain him, merely by reitérated assurances of sympathy and constant, unfailing friendship. At last, I asked,

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, nothing! nothing! Only give me your sympathy, or I die! I die! without that support!"

"You have my sympathy, dearest Wolfgang, my adopted brother; but will you not relieve your bosom of its burden of grief; will you not lay it on my breast, that I may help you to bear it?"

"Not now! Not now! I cannot."

I could only try to strengthen and soothe him by assurances of affection and esteem, until again observing the letter, I said,

"I see you have a letter, Wolfgang. Is it from home? Are your family all well?"

His eyes flew wildly around, and fell upon the letter. He sprang from me, stung to a sudden strength, and seizing it, tore it to atoms, and flung it from the window, exclaiming, furiously, while his gray eyes blazed with intolerable light.

"By heaven, if it were me! if it were me! that which I deserved and had a right to, I would seize and make my own though Satan himself with all his legions stood between!"

"Is this, then, a matter of property, Wolfgang?"

"Property! Property!" he echoed, with bitter scorn. "Do you suppose that all the money, all the 'property' in the world is worth one such tear of blood as the millions my heart has dropped to-night? No," he added, with contemptuous coolness, "it is not 'property.'"

"Wolfgang," I said, softly, "I have been unjust to fancy for an instant that such a cause could produce

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such a terrible effect; but what is it, then, my brother?"

"Ah! a matter of heart and soul, of life and immortality, of heaven and hell—leave me! I am distracted, delirious—leave me! You see that I am mad!"

"Can I not serve you in any manner, Wolfgang?"

"No! in no way, but in leaving me alone. Some day, perhaps, I will tell you something—not now."

I reluctantly left the room, my thoughts still continuing absorbed in Wolfgang and dwelling upon his woe.

To have seen him next morning, no one could believe it possible that he would ever, under any circumstances, have yielded to such a tempest of grief, or abandoned himself to such a more than womanish weakness. Dark, erect, haughty, reserved, he seemed, even to me, quite inaccessible. My affection for him was so great, my wish to do him good so importunate, that, in a few days, I re-essayed to do so.

We had been sauntering through the lawn together. We sat down on a bench under the shade of an oak tree. He fell into silence—into gloom. I thought that now was a favorable opportunity. His hands were folded and his eyes bent in abstraction upon a ring, which he then evidently saw not, on his little finger.

"Of what are you thinking, Wolfgang?" I asked. He started, turned, flashed on me a broad blaze of sheet lightning from his gray eyes. and replied with a sneer,

"I was thinking whether the coral, or the turquoise, made the prettiest seal ring!"

Repelled by his freezing reserve, and almost insulting scorn, I arose in anger and left him. That night, as I was in my room alone, he suddenly entered and throwing his arms around me, strained me to his bosom, almost distractedly, saying,

"Bear with me, Fairfield! I could not sleep with an estrangement between us. Bear with me. I am not always the same. I am an embodied war! I am not always myself!"

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The tender, the childish weakness certainly possessed him now. I thought—I wished I knew which was his proper self, and which was the other one—whether the haughty, regnant, scornful spirit, or whether the tender, loving, almost infantile nature, was his own peculiar self. I did not like to be hugged by a boy, either. I never did. There is a physical repulsion about the thing; and I felt the antipathy then, even when the affections of my soul moved so strongly toward him. I returned his embrace in a hurried manner, and then released him, loving him a hundred times more comfortably, after he had withdrawn his arm from around my waist, than I did while they encircled me; but then I possessed a cold, he an ardent temperament. He left me seemingly the happier for our reconciliation. I certainly was. For the next week or so, the prince was in the ascendant, and it was perilous to any one's self-esteem to approach his highness. One day, however, when he seemed unusually gloomy, I took his hand and said,

"Wolfgang, it is useless to try to disguise the fact, or conceal it from one who loves you as well as I do—there is a secret sorrow preying on your breast, eating your heart out—an arrow cankering in your festering bosom—let the hand of friendship, of brotherly love, draw it out and dress the wound."

I had better left him alone. He turned on me a look of haughty indignation, and said, in a tone of withering scorn.

"'A secret sorrow—a festering wound;' what verbal prettiness! And then the idea—are you perchance, a reader of romances, sir?"

I was nettled, more especially as I had only my own officious impertinence to blame for the affront; but people will take vengeance on any one before their own dear selves—so I answered him angrily.

"Yes! I am an occasional reader of romances, and they teach me, at least one lesson of discretion to wit: that 'where there is much mystery there is more guilt.'"

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Again the broad sheet lightning of his gray eyes blazed forth consumingly upon my face, and he turned white—white as the ashes of an intensely burning coal. I never saw such a diabolical countenance in all my life before, nor have I since. He started from me, and for days I saw nothing of him; he was ill, or sullen, in his own room. Thus ended my last attempt to win his confidence, but not our friendship, which typhoons of passion seemed to shake only to strengthening.

The summer session was soon over, and we were going home, not again to return to school, but to enter college. When we were about to take leave of each other, Wolfgang gave way to his impulsive and passionate nature, and embraced me cordially again and again, saying in excuse for his emotion,

"We part, Fairfield! We shall never meet again, probably, in this world. I am not going to return here. I am going to college."

I was very much affected at his manner. I was surprised, also, at his announcement.

"Going to college? What college are you going to?"

"To Harvard University," he said, embracing me again.

"To Harvard? I was to have entered the University of Virginia; but Wolfgang, why need we part, since we are Damon and Pythias—come you also to the University of Virginia."

A thunder cloud darkened his brow, and once more the vivid lightning flashed from his eyes.

"No! Impossible! I cannot go there!"

"Cannot?"

"Cannot—you understand!"

"Your father is obstinate in his own choice of a University, irrespective of your taste and wishes?"

"My father is the soul of kindness and moderation! But, as you say, he prefers that I should enter Harvard."

"Well! my guardian will acquiesce in my wishes in that respect, and as you cannot accompany me to

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Charlottesville, I must meet you at Harvard. *Au revoir.*"

We took a brotherly leave of each other, and separated to meet, at the opening of the winter term, at the University.

When I reached home, my guardian was alarmed at what he called my consumptive looks, attributed it to too much confinement and too severe study, and insisted upon my remaining at home, visiting my Louisiana relations, or traveling a year before going to the University. My strength, in fact, for the last six months, had suffered some decline, but it had been so gradual that I had scarcely observed it. The change was apparent to those who had seen me in full health a half year previous.

Every one likes upon occasion to find themselves an object of interest, especially every one who like me had sadly missed parental affection and solicitude. I had no objection to be petted, coddled and indulged. I was easily persuaded to give up the contemplated seclusion and monotony of the University for twelve months of pleasing travel-variety.

I pass over the incidents of my year of travel, as they have little to do with the subject of my story, with one exception, to wit: I found on visiting the plantation of my old bachelor uncle in East Feliciana, that he had just taken unto himself a wife—a circumstance that might seriously affect my future in one very important respect, reduce my prospects from those of a millionaire to that of a man of very modest competence, such as my moderate patrimony would afford. However, the discovery of the fact had no effect upon my mind beyond exciting my mirthfulness at the amazing secretiveness of the old gentleman about his marriage, for which I could see no rational cause. Why should he not make himself happy at fifty-five? It was late in the day to be sure, and seemed a great deal queerer in an old bachelor who had lived half a century in single blessedness than it would have looked in a widower even older. The probable loss of the heirship

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of his wealth gave me no sort of uneasiness. The mercenary capacities of a youth of eighteen are not usually expanded enough to take the extent, strong enough to weigh the specific gravity, or shrewd enough to estimate the value of millions. All they want at present is plenty of pocket money for passing fancies and follies.

My twelve months of freedom expired, and, with invigorated health and renewed ardor for study, I prepared to enter Harvard University.

It was at the opening of the winter term that I reached that place, and there I met again Wolfgang Wallraven, so changed as to be—no, not as to be unrecognizable, for his dark and wild individuality would have revealed itself through all atmospheres.

But could this tall, dignified, self-possessed, and graceful young gentleman be indeed the development of that fierce, morose boy, with his sudden gushes of tenderness, his collapses of utter weakness, and his prostrations of despair? And could this be the work of only a year?

I inquired how long he had been at the University.

He replied, twelve months; adding that he had remained there during the intermission between the two terms.

"That is it," thought I. "There is something in that home of his that warps, degrades, and stunts him. Ever after going home, he has returned more acrid, morose, fierce, and dangerous, than before. That home! What an interest it has for me! With what a glamour it attracts me! I wish he would invite me to it!"

As time passed, I discovered that the character of Wallraven had undergone a change, or perhaps only an apparent change, scarcely less surprising than that of his person and manners; the wild and wayward temper, the fierce outbreaks of passion, the morose surliness, were gone or governed; the fitful, loving, tender, childlike nature had disappeared, or was suppressed; the almost servile humility with which, without giving me his confidence, he would cast himself

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upon my sympathy for support—fits of feebleness, or idiocy, that almost fatally betrayed his nobler nature, were utterly sunk, and the haughty, the regnant spirit had risen upon it. There was an air of regal beauty, of commanding grace, in his person and manner, such as I have never since seen in but one other man. The prince had certainly gained the permanent ascendency, and now governed the whole inner kingdom, once so discordant, conflicting and rebellious.

And yet—yet—there were times when certain gleams from his eyes seemed to warn me that all that was worst and most dangerous in his character was not dead, but sleeping, and gathering gigantic strength in repose; that some day, and under some circumstances, the fiend within him might break out with terrible and destroying fury.

Our mutual esteem and affection constantly increased. He was my confidant at least, and if I were not his, my more matured reason convinced me that it was because the secrets of his bosom, whatever they were, could not be imparted, but he compensated me by the most devoted affection.

At the end of the term, I invited, I besought him to accompany me home; but he declined the visit. I thought that he might possibly return the courtesy by a similar invitation to me, which *en passant* I should certainly have accepted; but he did not. To be brief, we spent a year and a half together at college before either of us knew anything personally of the family of the other. At the end of every term, I renewed my invitation, which he always declined. At the close of our third term, as a matter now of habit more than of expectation, I invited him to go home with me, and, to my surprise and delight he accepted my invitation, and prepared to accompany me.

It was while we were on our journey that I told him my sister, Regina, would be home for the holidays, and that, above all things, I was desirous of presenting him to her, my "Queen of beauty," my "fair one with golden locks."

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CHAPTER III.

REGINA FAIRFIELD.

Yet that fair lady's eye methinks hath less
Of deep and still and pensive tenderness
Than might beseem thy sister's—on her brow
Something too much there sits of native scorn,
And her smile kindles with a conscious glow
As from the thought of sovereign beauty born.—
MRS. HEMANS.

"THE Fair One, with Golden Locks," was the title of a beautiful fairy tale of an enchanted princess, of which my sister Regina used to be very fond; and in gay reference to her penchant for this, and in compliment to her high style of blonde beauty, we gave her this *sobriquet*. We also called her "Queen Blanche," in flattery of her regal grace, and her exceeding, her wonderful fairness. She was, in fact, the very fairest living thing I ever saw. You have seen the wreck! amazing beautiful, even in ruins; but that thing bears no more resemblance to my resplendent Regina, than does the charred skeleton of the lightning-blasted tree to the green and stately mountain pine—heaven receive her! To return.

I had not seen my sister Regina for two years; during which time she had been absent at a "Finishing School." I was therefore curious and anxious to meet her, now that she had returned home permanently. I wished to see what these two years, from sixteen to eighteen, spent at the finishing school, had done for her, who, bating pride, already embodied my idea of womanly perfection.

We reached our journey's end.

It was late in a lovely March day, that we arrived at Willow Hill. We had changed our traveling dresses for drawing-room costumes, at the little town of A——, two miles distant, while waiting for the carriage that was to meet us there.

Therefore, upon our arrival, we were ushered at once into my sister's presence, who was already expecting

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us. Much as I was prepared for improvement, I confess I was surprised, delighted, and somewhat abashed, at the sight of the elegant woman awaiting our approach.

She sat erect, but at ease, in a high-backed arm-chair, covered with purple velvet, whose dark, rich background threw out her beautiful and graceful form in fine relief. She was arrayed in rich white satin, whose glossy and ample folds, descending to her feet, merely permitted the tip of one tiny embroidered slipper to be visible. Her arms and neck, fairer than the satin itself, were bare, except for being delicately shaded by falls of the richest and finest lace, and encircled by pearl bracelets and necklace. Her hair, her "golden locks," were rolled off from her temples in rich and heavy folds *à la Pompadour*, and bound back by oriental pearls, exposing a brow of frosty fairness and sovereign pride. There was a coldness in this statuesque dignity of my sister that prevented me from meeting her with any demonstration of fraternal love, or joy. I think I met her then, as I should have met any other "proud ladie" to whom I might have been introduced, and then I turned, and, presenting my college friend, named,

"Mr. Wallraven, of Virginia."

Regina slightly inclined her graceful head, in acknowledgment of Wallraven's profound and deferential bow, and raising her eyes with a quick, and quickly withdrawn glance, held out her hand to welcome him to Willow Hill, saying, quite graciously,

"I know the Wallravens, of Hickory Hall, by reputation——"

Here Wolfgang gave a violent start, reeled as under an unexpected and overwhelming blow, made a mighty effort and recovered his self-command, all in a passage of a few seconds, while I looked inquiringly at Regina, and she, with calm surprise, regarded him.

"Will you be seated, Mr. Wallraven, and you, Ferdinand?" she said.

We sat down; and Regina, possibly to fill an awkward pause in the conversation, observed,

"Yes—I know the Wallravens of Hickory Hall, by

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history and report. Wolfgang Wallraven, your American ancestor and namesake, sir, I heard my father say, was a Lutheran refugee, who came to Virginia in the company of his intimate friend, our ancestor Lord B——, and who, as long as his lordship remained governor of Virginia, retained a place in his council. I hope, sir, that we may become better known to each other."

On concluding these gracious words, my princess raised her eyes to those of Wallraven; but they swiftly fell again, while the faintest color dawned on her fair cheek. Wallraven had bowed, and bowed, at the close of every condescending sentence; but now, when common civility required him to say something, he was dumb. I came to his relief.

"Miss Fairfield," said I, "is quite *au fait* to the early history, antiquities, and traditions of the Old Dominion, for which she has a great veneration. She is rich in legendary lore, and, though born in Alabama, evidently considers Virginia her mother country, and infinitely prefers it to her native soil."

"For many excellent reasons, without a doubt," said Wallraven, with a bow towards my fair queen, who, with her snowy eyelids drooped till her long golden lashes rested on her delicately roseate cheek, remained silent. Now I came to her succor.

"Regina likes the conservative pride of the Old Dominion—the prevalence of old English feeling—family pride, which mother England herself has outlived, but that still survives in her eldest daughter, Virginia, the child that most resembles her. It is a prejudice—an anti-republican thing, contrary to the spirit of the nineteenth century. You are lagging behind the age, Regina, but you will get over this."

A cold smile chilled the fair face of my sister, who deigned no other reply.

"This is not so, lady, my friend exaggerates; these are not your sentiments," said Wallraven, in his deep, rich tones, and with a manner in which was strangely blended deprecation and dignity.

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She quietly raised those golden eyelashes, to drop them again instantly, as she replied,

"Yes! since I am constrained to confess it; and surely I may do so without offence in the presence of one of so old and pure a stock as the Wallravens, of Hickory Hall, whose family can be traced back to the time of the Saxon Heptarchy. Yes, I do think, that the much ridiculed family pride of Maryland and Virginia, ridiculed, however, only by vulgar wits among the *nouveaux riches* of other States, is, at least, far more worthy of respect than the low pride of new wealth, or appearance of wealth, which is oftentimes no more than superficial finery. The ancient pride of the old families of Maryland and Virginia is assuredly well grounded. Many of them, the Wallravens among the rest," (inclining her head graciously to Wolfgang,) "are assuredly descended from the very flower of the old English aristocracy—many among them dating back to a period long anterior to the Norman Conquest, and numbering in their line some of the most illustrious among the warriors, statesmen, and churchmen of England—noble scions of noble houses, who, for their conservatism, and attachment to the *ancien régime* were driven out by that fanatical spirit of radicalism which, even in the reign of James, began to manifest itself in Great Britain."

"It is true, lady, that the rich valleys and plains of Maryland and Virginia were settled by a very different set of men, actuated by a very opposite set of motives, to those that sent the hardy Puritans to the sterile shores of New England; and that may go far to account for different domestic and social manners, and a different state policy."

"I confess I prefer the ancestral pride of a Virginia planter to the purse pride of a Yankee peddler."

"Those are extreme cases, lady."

"Sir, have you no pride of ancestry? Is it not a matter of self-esteem to you, that your remote progenitor was a Saxon noble instead of being a Saxon serf?"

"No, lady, it is not a matter of pride to me," said

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Wolfgang in a tone so mournful, that I looked anxiously upon him. "I own, I honor New England for the perfectly level platform on which all her sons stand with equal rights."

"Let us change the subject," said I.

"With pleasure," said Regina; and, turning to Wolfgang, she asked, "Do you like music, Mr. Wallraven? I have a very rich toned piano-forte, in fine tone just now."

Wolfgang instantly declared a passion for music, and, as Regina arose, he offered her his arm, to take her across the room; but she declined the civility with a stately inclination of the head, and, dropping her golden eyelashes, swept on alone in sovereign grace and beauty, and seated herself before the instrument. We followed her. Wolfgang took a station at the back of her chair, to turn the leaves of her music-book. She played and sung several pieces in a very masterly style; but they were all of one character—grand, martial, heroic. At the end of the last piece, the folding doors were thrown open, and a servant appeared, and announced supper. Now rising, and again courteously declining the proffered arm of Wallraven, and moving on alone in her regal pride and purity, she preceded us to the supper-room.

After supper we adjourned to the drawing-room, where we passed the evening in conversation, in music, in the examination of new books, prints, such articles of *vertu* as were scattered around, and in projecting plans for the next day's occupation and amusement; no very difficult thing for three persons alone in a country house together, for our guardian was absent."

Soon after this we separated for the night. I accompanied Wallraven to his room.

"Well, Wallraven," said I, as soon as we were alone, "How do you like my sister? Is she 'all my fancy painted her,' or am I a blind enthusiast?"

"Brothers are, of all persons, the least apt to be," dryly replied Wolfgang, who seemed to be threatened with a return of his old boyish surliness.

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"And brother's friends are in no danger of becoming so," said I, good-humoredly.

Without noticing my last remark, he said, in the slow, oracular tone of a judge balancing the weight of every word.

"Miss Fairfield is beautiful—she is BEAUTY; but, like the mountain snow, she is high, cold, pure, fair, frosty."

"Ah!" said I, "the least lovely of Regina's traits of character has revealed itself this evening. Lofty principles, high-toned sense of honor, perfect truthfulness, large benevolence, generosity, a rich and well cultivated intellect—the treasures of the heart and mind—remained to be discovered!"

"Fairfield! don't fling your sister into my arms so determinately, lest I catch her!" replied Wallraven, with a sarcastic smile that raised my anger to such a pitch as very nearly to make me forget that he was my guest. I replied in a cold and haughty tone—

"Miss Fairfield is not a woman to be thrown or caught, or by any means to suggest such a thought."

"Of course not! It is you who suggest it! Pooh, Fairfield! 'an arrow from Cupid's bow'—to express the thing as you would express it—is lightly quivering in my flesh. I can easily pluck it out and cast it from me, if you will allow me to do so. Do not you drive it to my heart, impale me with it—for nothing would ensue but death! Miss Fairfield will probably bestow her hand upon some, 'magnificent son of Acbar' who will be quite worthy of her!"

"I should like to know what you mean by presuming to consider what I have said to you in the light you do. What right have you to do so?"

"Only the right of knowledge, a fatal gift of insight into the hearts of others, and a dangerous habit of reading aloud what I find written therein," he replied, with a mournful sarcasm.

I looked at him from head to foot. He was sitting in an easy-chair, with his hands joined on his knees, his brigand-looking head bent forward, his piercing

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eyes fixed on the floor, and his veil of jet-black hair falling forward and shading his darkling countenance. There was so much bitter sorrow in his attitude, expression, and tone, that my displeasure fled.

"Wolfgang!" said I, "what is it that makes me love you so? You say the most exasperating things to me, and then disarm my wrath by a look, a tone?"

"What—is it, perhaps, that you feel I am your friend? Fairfield, my dear fellow, put me in no future plans of your own. The greatest injury I could do myself, the greatest benefit I could confer upon you is to tell you this. Leave me. Good night!"

We met next morning early. Like most houses in this neighborhood, our house had long piazzas, upstairs and down, running around three sides of the house, with the front room windows, all opening on hinges upon them. Therefore, as I opened my chamber door and stepped out upon the piazza, I saw that Wallraven had come out of his room and was promenading there. He turned, smiling, to meet me, took my arm, and said something complimentary of the "beautiful country," now in full spring bloom, though the month was March. After promenading there for some time, enjoying the pure morning air and the extensive prospect, we went below and entered the morning room. It was a long, handsomely-furnished apartment.

Regina was standing at the upper end of the room, attended by two maid-servants, to whom she was giving some directions, and who, as we entered, left her, and passed out by a side door.

Regina came to meet us. She wore a pure white morning dress of some very transparent light tissue, with the skirt made very full, whose gossamer folds floated gracefully with every movement of her queenly form. Her golden hair was rolled back from her snowy forehead, as on the evening before, only instead of the jeweled bandeau, it was bound by a narrow white ribbon. She held in her hand a few white lilies, whose perfume filled the air. If I could find a word

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to express the union of the loftiest *hauteur* with the clearest purity and the most aerial delicacy, I would use that word to describe Regina, as, wafting fragrance with every motion, she floated on to meet us.

"Do you like lilies, Mr. Wallraven? These are the first the gardener has sent me. They are very fine," she said, separating one from her bunch and offering it to Wolfgang.

"It is your favorite flower, Miss Fairfield."

"Why do you think so?"

"They resemble you—more! they express you!"

Regina dropped those white eyelids again, and, moving on before us, said,

"Come, then, and I will show you how much I like lilies;" and, leaving the room, she floated on, followed by us through the wide hall, and into an elegant little boudoir, whose glass doors opened upon a small but beautiful garden of white lilies, in the center of which was a clear pond, its borders fringed with white lilies, and its waters reflecting the graceful forms of two white swans that sailed upon its bosom.

"This is the way I like lilies."

"And all things that express elegance, purity, and pride," said Wolfgang, pointing to the swans.

Yes, the unity and harmony of purity, pride, and elegance, revealed itself in Regina's whole being—her form, features, and complexion—her tastes, habits, and occupations.

We spent the hour before breakfast in the boudoir.

Soon after breakfast another little incident occurred that exhibited my sister's worst trait in rather an unfavorable light. We had returned to the morning room to await the horses, which were ordered to be brought round at ten for us to take a ride over the plantation. We were passing the few moments in conversation, when we saw a handsome barouche drawn by a pair of splendid dappled grays approach, and stop before the house. In an instant I saw Regina's lip curl with that supercilious expression, all but too familiar in her countenance, and she said,

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"It is the carriage of Mrs. and the Misses O'Blemmis. Ferdinand, do you remember them?"

"I do not, my dear."

"No, truly. Mr. Wallraven, five years ago a young Irishman by the name of O'Blemmis was engaged as tutor to the only son of the late Colonel Sumner, of Hyde Place. He was a puny boy, and died, but the Irishman, who did not drink, married the boy's sister, got the estate, and brought out his mother and half a dozen of his own sisters to help him enjoy it. You shall presently see them all. And by the way, Mr. Wallraven, here is a thing I have seldom seen or heard observed of Irish character, and yet my own observation of this proves the truth of it to my own mind, viz.; whenever a young Irishman comes to America, and is temperate, he makes sooner or later, by perseverance or by *coup-de-main*, a fortune. Here they are."

And the door was thrown open, and the servant announced, "Mrs. O'Blemmis, Miss O'Blemmis, Miss Bridget O'Blemmis;" and those ladies entered.

My sister received them with something more than *hauteur*, which they were certainly too acute to misunderstand, while they were too politic to resent. Wallraven and myself exerted our conversational powers as an atonement for Miss Fairfield's coldness.

I am not going to tire you with a report of the visit that tired me. I mention it merely to remark, that after this visit—throughout the ride, and indeed throughout the day—Wallraven's manners to Regina were marked by a freezing respect, somewhat similar to that she had shown the O'Blemmises, and that this slightly discomposed the air of elegant ease that ever distinguished Miss Fairfield.

On our return home that evening, Wallraven retired early to his chamber, which he likewise kept during the greater part of the next day, excusing himself upon the plea of having letters to write home. This gave me the first opportunity I had had since my return of being alone with my sister.

We talked of family matters first. She informed me

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that our uncle's young wife had a fine son, which fact, though it cuts us off from an immense fortune, did not afflict us much. Our mercenary years had not come.

Then we talked of Wallraven. Regina acknowledged then, what I am sure she would not have confessed a month later, that she had found Wallraven exceedingly interesting.

"Yes, Ferdinand, the most absorbing person that ever engaged my thoughts! What an air he has! too dark, far too dark and tragic for society; yet one sees that it has its causes in some sternest, hardest truth. His face is so full of expression, and so deep in interest. His countenance affects me with a creeping terror such as one feels in looking down at night into a profound abyss. And then his moods are so opposite and contradictory: at one time he has the majestic air of a monarch in full sway of his power; at another, almost that of a slave. And in the most favorable mood he has that air of passive defiance, of proud humility, such as might become a dethroned prince as he bows his royal neck, and lays his uncrowned head upon the block! And in every action there is such earnest such profound truth!"

"He is a strange being, full of discord. Yes, his soul is the 'profound abyss' to which you have likened his expression of countenance, with the night of a deep sorrow darkening it forever!"

"This is really so?"

"Really and truly so; and has been so ever since first I knew him when he was a boy!"

"And the nature of his sorrow?"

"I do not know—cannot even conjecture. I have been his bosom friend for years, and he has never confided it to me. I have exhausted every honorable means of discovering, and cannot find the slightest clue. Of one thing, however, I am positively certain, that guilt has nothing to do with this calamity. I feel that in a thousand instincts! And when I say that, I mean neither his guilt, the idea of which would be preposterous, nor that of his parents."

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"I believe you! The name of the Wallravens has for centuries been the synonym for an almost chivalric virtue, for an almost romantic standard of honor. Upon account of their absolute purity they have been twitted with 'knight errantry.' This Wolfgang, how he occupies me! Oh! Ferdinand, after all, you have not been a friend or you would have disburdened his heart of this secret before now!"

"That is all you know of the matter, my dear Regina! I have exposed myself to insult more than once in trying to serve him; but never since we met at Harvard."

Regina did not reply to this, but fell into deep thought, which lasted some moments; then, with a profound but involuntary sigh, she rose and left the room to dress for the evening.

Wallraven joined us in the drawing-room in the evening; and I, with a view of making the next day pass more gaily than this had done, proposed various projects of amusement. Among other plans, I suggested that we should ride to town the next morning, and spend the day, and go in the evening to the theater, to see Booth play Othello. Regina at once and most decisively vetoed this proposition.

"It must necessarily be the most loathsome of all conceivable exhibitions!" she said, "and I wonder how its representation upon any stage should be tolerated for a single hour."

The plan was of course abandoned, and another substituted in its place. Soon after that we separated for the night.

One discovery in physics and metaphysics, I had made in the course of this week, to wit: that love at first sight was a fact, and no poetic fiction. Regina, with all her cold *hauteur*, could not, to save her soul alive, raise her eyes to meet Wolfgang's; and Wallraven's deep bass tones trembled when he spoke to her. I was pleased. Regina's first passion was aristocracy, her second, Old Virginia. Here, then, was a young gentleman that she herself had placed among the oldest and most aristocratic in the State, he himself the most

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distinguished-looking of his distinguished race, and his large patrimonial estate lying in the richest and most beautiful region of country and in the midst of the most wealthy and aristocratic neighborhood in the Old Dominion—among those who had been the friends and relatives of her proud family for centuries past. Could I have chosen a destiny for my fair, proud sister, it would have been this. Could Regina have chosen a fate for herself, it would have been this. And Wallraven—to adore, or not to adore Regina, was now no matter of volition with him!

Let me hurry on.

We remained at Willow Hill six weeks. During this time I could not fail to observe the deep and ever deepening interest with which my friend and my sister regarded each other, nor the anxiety with which each constantly sought to conceal these sentiments from the other. Regina's manner was cold and haughty; Wallraven's, distant and reserved. Yet Wallraven would grow pale as death, if her hand but chanced to touch him; and Regina would tremble if he suddenly came in her sight.

Every week Wallraven's gloom deepened, while Regina's delicate color faded.

I was provoked with both. Why should Regina act the empress and exaggerate the part so abominably; and why should Wallraven be so easily flouted off—so backward?—for that appeared to me then to be the position of affairs between them.

As the day of departure drew near, they treated each other with the most frigid coldness.

The last day of our stay at length arrived. We remained at home all day, preparing for our departure. We were to ride to A——, to meet the stage, as it passed at five o'clock the next morning. To effect this, we were to leave the house at four. We were to take leave of Regina over night.

Regina, Wallraven, and myself passed the evening together in the drawing-room. Regina gave us music, but I saw that her touch was inaccurate, and that her

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voice trembled. It had been arranged that we should retire early, to be in time for the stage, so, at ten o'clock, I gave the signal and we arose.

I went to Regina, to bid her adieu. She was fearfully, ghastly white, and trembling so that she was compelled to grasp the chair for support. I took her hand: it was cold, and even heavy—pressed it to my lips, and turned away.

Wallraven approached her, to take his leave. He coldly received the hand she coldly extended to him. Both raised their eyes simultaneously—their gaze, full of anguish, full of mutual reproach, of mutual inquiry—and then—suddenly, in an instant, forgetful of time, place, and circumstances—forgetful of etiquette and propriety—utterly oblivious of my presence and observation—he madly, passionately, caught her, strained her to his bosom, pressing a kiss on her face, while she dropped her head upon his breast, and, bursting into tears, sobbed convulsively, hysterically.

He lifted and bore her to the sofa, laid her there, kneeled by her side, squeezing her hands, stroking her brow and hair, murmuring words of passionate devotion and tenderness!

I was *de trop*—I felt it. I went out, but scarcely had I time to reach my own chamber, before I heard Wolfgang run up the stairs, and, bursting his door open, rush in, and clang it to behind him. I scarcely wondered at any eccentricity of Wallraven's! I set down this piece of conduct to the wildness of joy.

Mentally resolving that our journey must now be deferred a day or two, and that therefore there was no longer a necessity of hastening to bed, I went down into the drawing-room, for the purpose of finding and congratulating my sister. The drawing-room was vacant, she had gone to her chamber. I returned to mine in a well satisfied frame of mind; but I wished to see Wallraven again.

Before retiring to bed that night I tapped at his door, and then without waiting for leave, and with the free-

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dom of old friendship, I pushed the door open, and entered the room.

Good heaven! were the old horrid days of the preparatory school come back, and with a vengeance, too! He was sitting bolt upright at the foot of his bed, his hands on his knees, his open gray eyes staring into vacancy, his black locks hanging wildly, elf-like, about his livid and haggard cheeks, his whole appearance cold, stiff, corpse-like. A blood-guilty and unconverted criminal on the eve of his execution—a man in a cataleptic fit—one struck dead by a thunderbolt—might sit so rigid, statue-like, still. My very blood ran cold with a vague horror, as I looked at him.

Terrified for his health, for his life, I sprang toward him, seized his frozen hands, gazed into his stony eyes, placed my hand upon his death-like brow. At that touch a shudder ran all over him, relaxing the rigidity of his form, and he laughed! Such a sardonic, such a maniac, such a devilish laugh, I never heard in my life before, and never wish to hear again! It was not loud, but long, low, and bitter. Dreadfully alarmed for his sanity, I exclaimed,

"In the name of heaven, Wallraven, what is the matter? speak! Tell me, I conjure you!"

Again the shudder, again the long, low, and bitter laugh, and then he said,

"Am I not a Wallraven, whose family dates back to a period anterior to the Saxon Heptarchy?"

I gazed at him in a fixed horror. He seemed to know my thoughts, for he replied to them sardonically.

"I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and soberness. Ask that snow queen of beauty, your fair, proud sister!"

I was spell-bound by grief and terror. I could not stir. I gazed at him.

> "I am not mad! I would to heaven I were!
> For then 'tis like I should forget myself.
> Oh! if I could, what grief should I forget!
> I am not mad! This hair I tear is mine,"

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he declaimed, travestying the lines with sardonic exaggeration, and finishing with a shouting laugh of mockery.

"Oh! heaven! but this is horrible! Wallraven! Wallraven!"

"I am not mad!" he said, with an omnipotent effort that at length sent apart the curdled blood in his veins, and dispersed the storm clouds that darkened over his spirit.

"Oh! Wolfgang! Wolfgang! you are not mad but you will become so. You will inevitably become so, if this secret suffering of yours recommences and augments so fearfully!" said I.

A spasm convulsed his frame. He dropped his head upon his hands, and his stringy black locks fell forward, veiling both.

"Oh! Wallraven, my heart's dearest brother, is there no way in which I can relieve, can serve you?"

Again the spasm shook him.

"I will not, as in the days of my thoughtless boyhood, ask you for your secret, my soul's dear Wolfgang, but——"

"But I will tell you! I will tell you!" he exclaimed, desperately, "tell you while my good angel has power over me! while *her* escape is possible! tell you the dark and fatal thing that has burned, blighted, and blasted me and mine forever! Listen!"

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CHAPTER IV.

THE REVELATION.

WELL, I listened eagerly, too eagerly. He paused, dropped his head upon his hands, and seemed to be diving into the past.

Deep silence reigned between us, broken only by the supernaturally loud ticking of the chamber clock, hurrying on toward midnight. There he sat upon the foot of the bed, his elbows resting on his knees, his face buried in the palms of his hands, his stringy, jet black locks falling forward, shudder after shudder shaking his frame!

"Poor fellow! he does not know how to begin," thought I, and waited anxiously some time, a feeling of delicacy withholding me from interrupting him, until I found, by the cessation of his shudders and the perfect immobility of his form, that he had fallen into a fit of deep abstraction, and that his thoughts were far, far from me. Then, after some hesitation, I recalled him, by a word spoken in a low, gentle tone,

"Wallraven!"

He started slightly, raised his shaggy black head, and gazed upon me from his light gray eyes with the bewildering look of one awakened from a deep sleep, with a dream still overshadowing his spirits.

"Wallraven!" said I again, in a still kinder tone, "you were about to give me——"

"Ha! ha! ha! Oh, thou son of Eve! Never tell me of woman's curiosity! We have not a bit, have we?" laughed he, in the most sarcastic and exasperating manner.

You will wonder, perhaps, at the strange patience I had with that bitter and sardonic youth; but, in truth, I was more pained than angry at his sarcastic and insulting tone, for under all was betrayed the profoundest sorrow, the acutest suffering. I felt the same com-

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passionate toleration for his ill-temper, that we feel for the irritability of any dearly loved sufferer. I replied, gently,

"I did not solicit your confidence, Wolfgang. It was voluntarily proffered on your part; and I tell you now, that unless by so doing I can very materially serve you, I have no wish to pry into your secrets, further than fidelity to my sister's interests under existing circumstances seems to require."

"To what existing circumstances do you refer?" he asked, quickly.

"To your relations, or implied relations, with Miss Fairfield."

"And what do you suppose them to be?"

"From what I witnessed this evening, I presume that you are engaged," I replied, gazing at him with anxious scrutiny.

"You are wrong—we are not engaged!"

"Not! Is it possible that Regina has rejected you?"

"No; for I have not offered her my hand."

"What! not! Then you intend to do so at the first opportunity."

"No! I have no intention of ever offering myself to Miss Fairfield!"

"Then, by heaven! much as I have forgiven you upon my own account, you shall first give me satisfaction for your unpardonable conduct of this evening, and then swear never to offend Miss Fairfield by coming into her presence again."

"Oh! Ferdinand, my fine fellow, don't flare up. You do not know what you are talking about!"

"I say I will have satisfaction!"

"And so you shall; any and every satisfaction you please, and as much of it as you please! Come, I will fight, or apologize, as you will."

"Sir, you are my guest. I beseech you, with all convenient speed that you put yourself in some more practicable relation to the brother of the woman you have offended, that he may——"

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"Blow my brains out with a better grace!"

"Call you to a strict account of your proceedings of this evening."

"I have betrayed friendship, trust, hospitality; I merit death! Shoot me where I sit, Ferdinand. I wish you would!"

"You are mad."

"I kissed her twenty times, Ferdinand, and I never intend to marry her. Come, why don't you shoot me?"

"You are a lunatic—you are not responsible for any word or act," said I, and I was beginning to feel so. If I had been ever so angry with him, my resentment would have vanished, when with one of his sudden changes of mood he dropped his head upon my shoulder, and sobbed and wept like the melting of an avalanche, gasping between whiles, in low, earnest, fervent, interrupted tones.

"I love and worship your beautiful and haughty sister! Love her because she is fair, worship her because she is proud! Yes! yes! I worship the ground she walks on—for it is holy ground; the pebble her foot spurns—for it is a precious stone! Words! words! breath! air! Look you! People have talked about dying for their beloved! I am doing it! I am doing it!"

Language cannot convey the heartrending tone in which these words were spoken. He went on,

"Yes, yes! I will account for my 'conduct' of this evening! I had firmly repressed my feelings for six weeks. I thought the danger over, or well-nigh over! I went up to her to-night, to bid her adieu, with the stern determination of never, never seeing her again. She held out her hand—looking up to me with her beautiful, bewildering, maddening eyes—eloquent with love, sorrow, reproach, inquiry—and the great tide of long-suppressed emotion rushed in, filling my heart, flooding my brain, bearing down and sweeping away reason, memory, understanding! and I did and said—some maniac things! Come, shoot me, if you please! Yes, I will meet you when and where you please, and bare my bosom to your knife or ball, but never raise

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my hand against you, my brother, my heart's dear brother! In the name of heaven, then, why don't you speak to me?"

"Because I have nothing to say. I am mystified and miserable!"

"Yet, oh! do not shut up your heart to me! do not! You love me! do not, therefore, lay up remorse for all your long future life, by harshness to me now—for look you! my life will be short—my death violent! I know it! Speak to me!"

"Alas! Wallraven, what shall I say? You entreat me not to shut up my heart to you. I do not do it. On the contrary, it is you who close yours to me. Yet do not misunderstand me, I do not complain of this, though the passion you have declared for my sister—a passion that I see but too clearly exists, and is reciprocated—makes me extremely anxious, upon account of Regina, when I reflect upon the dark mystery which you confess has blighted your own life, and dread may blight hers!"

He dropped his head upon my shoulder again, and with a huge heart sob gasped.

"I cannot! I cannot! I cannot, by the broken heart of my dead mother! by the smitten brow of my gray-haired father! I cannot reveal to you this blasting mystery! I have tried hard this evening to tell you, and the words stick in my throat! But this I will promise you—never to see Miss Fairfield again! Ah! you cannot guess the suffering I bring myself, the suffering I withhold from you, on making this promise!"

"I do not demand such a promise; yet—but, Wolfgang, such a demand will depend upon your reception of a question I am about to ask you, which you may answer or not, just as you see fit. This dark secret—is it connected with guilt or with disease?"

"No! no! no! God knows, that whatever may be their other misfortunes, the Wallravens are physically, mentally, and morally sound!"

"Why, so I have always heard of them. They are even proverbial for these qualities. Now, in the name

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of heaven, give me your hand, my dear Wolfgang! Win Regina if you can! I feel sure that your distress, whatever it may be, is morbid. Nonsense! Love and friendship will cure you. What! Young, healthy, handsome, moral, intelligent, accomplished, wealthy, and of high rank, loving and beloved, with no one to cross your wishes—what should trouble you? I begin to think you are a mere hypochondriac"—and so I really did.

You will pronounce this hasty confidence very wrong—so it doubtless was; but I loved Wolfgang Wallraven with more than a brother's love; I was by nature trusting to a fault; I was inexperienced; and I have expiated the error by suffering in every vein of my heart and brain!

The next morning we set out on our return to the North, Wolfgang insisted upon our going, as previously arranged. I had stopped at Regina's door, to see if possibly she was up, but all was dark and silent in her room. We left without seeing her again.

We reached the University some time after the commencement of the term, and had to apply ourselves with double vigor and perseverance to our studies, in order to make up for lost time.

From the day of our re-entrance into college, Wallraven was everything that the most exacting and fastidious friend could desire him to be—calm, self-possessed, dignified, gracious—though seldom, perhaps never, cheerful. He never voluntarily mentioned Regina to me; and if ever I would name her to him, he would govern a strongly rising emotion, and say, "As Milton toiled for fame, as Napoleon toiled for dominion, so I toil for Regina! One day, when wealth and fame and power and dominion—such dominion as God gives genius—are mine, I may win her! When I have power to place her in the highest rank of society, in the most civilized city in a yet uncivilized world, then I will ask her to share her fate with mine—not till then!" or something like it. He did toil. He gained the highest approbation, the honor of the professors.

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The most brilliant auguries were drawn for his future. I shared them. I felt his power. I felt that if he could once conquer a peace in his own bosom, he might become just what he pleased.

As for Regina, she never mentioned him in any of her letters to me; but I knew too well that he was not forgotten, by the tone of sadness that pervaded all her expressed thoughts and feelings.

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CHAPTER V.

THE INSIDE OF THE OLD HALL.

"A lonesome lodge,
That stands so low in lonely glen,
The grim, tall windowes, dim and darke,
Are hung with Ivy, Brier and Yewe;
No shimmering sun here ever shone,
No halesome breeze here ever blewe,
No child, no matron, may you spye,
No cheerful host."—PERCY'S RELIQUES.

THE winter vacation approached, and I once more pressed Wallraven to return home with me and spend Christmas. He declined the invitation, and, to my surprise and delight, invited me to accompany him to his own home in Virginia. I accepted his proffered hospitality with much pleasure, and writing to Regina not to expect me there during the holidays, I prepared to accompany Wolfgang to Hickory Hall.

I cannot tell you with what interest, with what highly excited curiosity, I set out upon this journey to the interior of Virginia. I do not know what I expected to find; I only know that an old, very old and unknown country house always possessed a mystic charm for me; and here was one that, with its own peculiar mystery, took hold of both affection and imagination.

We journeyed by stage until we reached Washington city.

There, at the Indian Queen Hotel, we met Mr. Wallraven's handsome traveling carriage, with the splendid black horses, the well-dressed coachman, and mounted out-rider.

Early upon the morning succeeding our arrival at Washington city, we set out for the Valley of Virginia. You know how wild and beautiful, how savage and sub-

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lime the scenery becomes, as you approach the Blue Ridge. We traveled by easy stages, and were two days in reaching the grand pass of the Bear's Walk.

It was the evening of the second day when we began slowly to ascend the mountain.

It was nearly pitch dark. Floating masses of black, heavy, and lowering clouds obscured every ray, even of starlight. It was intensely, biting cold. Down from our right opened, as it seemed, to the very center of the earth, a vast profound abyss of blackness, cloud, and shadow, from the depths of which gleamed fitfully a lurid stream of red light, flitting hither and thither as we moved, like a jack-o'-lantern, amid the blackness of that ocean of shadows.

"That is our destination, that is my home—Hickory Hall—" said Wallraven, pointing to the elfish light.

"That! How in the name of Providence are we to get down there?" inquired I, in real anxiety.

"The road is certainly very dangerous on such a night as this, and I am about to order the lamps lighted." This command he accordingly gave, and the carriage was stopped, and the lamps were lighted.

We started again, and, soon turning sharply to the right, began to descend into the vale: but before we had proceeded many yards, the coachman drew up the horses, and turning round, said that the lamps only made the matter worse; that the lights and shadows on the downward and precipitous road were deceptive and dangerous; and finally gave it as his opinion, that we had better alight and walk down, which we accordingly did, or, rather, we climbed down—while the coachman led his horses slowly and carefully behind us. An hour's hard toil brought us to the foot of the mountain, where we resumed our seats in the carriage, and were driven swiftly toward the lurid light that marked the site of Hickory Hall. The carriage passed through an arched and broken gateway, the light fitfully falling upon the fragments of the old and glistening red sandstone that had once formed the pillars of the gate. We stopped immediately before the broad

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old-fashioned hall door, to which a flight of broad oak stairs and a portico led.

An old white-headed negro, with a candle in his hand, came out and met us at the door, and saluting Wallraven as "Master Wolfgang," showed us into—

One of those wainscoted halls so common to the old mansion houses throughout the old neighborhoods of Virginia. The dark and polished oak floor was uncarpeted, and the vast room was lighted up, as with a conflagration, by an immense fire of large and blazing hickory logs that roared and crackled in the huge chimney. Grim portraits frowned from the dark, oak-paneled walls, and the battle of Yorktown raged furiously above the chimney-piece. Four or five richly carved high-back chairs drew themselves haughtily up, repelling all advances. Nothing looked hearty and cheerful but the great and glowing fire that warmed and lighted the room so delightfully, and blazed and crackled so gayly, as to make amends for all.

"Will you go to your room now, or wait till after supper, Fairfield? John, how soon will supper be ready?" asked Wolfgang of me, and of the negro, in a breath.

"In half an hour, sir," replied the old man who had conducted us in.

"In half an hour; well, Fairfield, what say you? Will you go to your own room? or—John?"

"Sir!"

"What chamber have you got ready for Mr. Fairfield!"

"Mrs. Wallraven's room, sir."

"The deuce!"

"Yes, sir. You wrote us that the young gentleman was delicate, and that his room must be comfortable. Now, sir, Mrs. Wallraven's room is the only one as doesn't leak when it rains, and it is coming on to rain, sir."

"Very well. Is there a fire kindled there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are Mr. Fairfield's trunks carried up?"

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"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Fairfield, will you go now to your room to change your dress, or will you remain here until after supper?"

"I will remain here, Wallraven; but I am sadly afraid, my dear fellow, that I have turned some one, some lady, out of her room—that would be dreadful!"

"Some lady! Humph! romancing again. What lady do you fancy you have turned out of her room?"

"Mrs. Wallraven."

"Ah, Mrs. Wallraven, certainly. It was Mrs. Wallraven's chamber; but she was the last occupant and she has not used it for some time! Be easy, my dear fellow, the room is yours—only I hope it really don't leak."

"John!"

"Sir."

"Where is my father?"

"In his library, sir."

"Let him know that we have arrived. He expected us to-night."

"Yes, sir."

"Go, then."

The old servant left the room, and soon after the door opened, and—

A tall and venerable old gentleman, clothed in deep mourning, and with a head of hair as white as the driven snow, appeared. Wolfgang sprang, bounded to meet him. The old man opened his arms, and silently and sadly folded his son to his bosom. Then he came to me, and with a singular blending of sweetness, sadness, and dignity, welcomed me to his house. He had scarcely done so, when the door once more opened, and—

I raised my eyes to see one of the most majestic and beautiful women I ever beheld advancing within it. She, like the old gentleman, was dressed in deep mourning, and her fine black hair, glittering in a thousand jetty ripples, was turned in large Madonna loops down her cheeks, carried back, and woven in a large knot

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behind. She was too tall and too dark for my ideal of feminine beauty, but then her form was so finely rounded, her face so graciously, richly beautiful—a Cleopatra she was, such as we picture the Egyptian Queen for whom a world was lost!

"My daughter, Miss Wallraven," said the old gentleman, as the lady came in; and then, "Constantia, my child, this is Mr. Fairfield, with whom Wolfgang, by his letters, has already made us so well acquainted. Welcome him to Hickory Hall."

Miss Wallraven offered me the most beautiful dark hand I ever saw, and looked at me with a pair of large, dark, humid eyes, whose languid luster haunted me many a day and night thereafter, and in a voice whose tones were at once very low, and very full, round, and melodious, cordially bade me welcome.

In a few moments after this supper was announced, and we went to the table. Such a supper! It was one, such as only Virginia housekeepers know how to set out.

Yes, the supper was perfect—not so the company. Wolfgang was somber; the old gentleman's manner grave and courteous; Miss Wallraven's dignified and gracious; all very admirable, but not at all enlivening.

I felt an enthusiastic admiration of Miss Wallraven; but it was precisely the sort of admiration one would feel at suddenly beholding some marvelous masterpiece of nature or of art—some richly, gorgeously beautiful creation, whose very existence seemed a wonder. "Queen of Egypt," "Cleopatra," "Night," "Starlight," all things darkly splendid, grandly beautiful, seemed parallels for her. Gazing on her, I caught myself repeating these lines of Byron, and thinking how strikingly they portrayed her.

> "She walks in beauty, like the night,
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
> And all that's best of dark and bright
> Meet in her aspect and her eyes."

After supper we returned to the old wainscoted hall; more logs were thrown on the blazing fire, and we

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gathered around it. The evening passed pleasantly, with conversation, music, etc. At eleven o'clock we separated for the night, and Wolfgang himself attended me to my room. It was in the second story. In keeping with all in the house, it was an old-fashioned apartment, the two principal features being a large tent bedstead hung with dark-green damask, and a wide fireplace, in which burned and glowed that inevitable country blessing, a good wood fire.

"I will retort your question. 'How do you like my sister,' Fairfield?"

"Yes! that was friendly—was it not? You never mentioned your sister to me before; never prepared a poor fellow for the danger that lay before him—a regular ambuscade!"

I repented this flippant speech in a moment, when I saw how seriously Wolfgang took it.

"I am no egotist; I never was. I do not talk of myself and my family; I never did," he replied.

"Pooh! You mean to accuse me of egotism, because I have talked to you so much about my sister. Well! It is true I thought Regina the very *chef l'œuvre* of nature until I saw Miss Wallraven! She has astonished me! She has taken away my breath with admiration! with wonder! Can beauty like that exist anywhere else than in the ideal world of poets and artists? Can such rich beauty really live and move and have its being in the actual world? be sensible to sight and touch?"

Wallraven looked really offended.

"Come!" said he, "Constantia never set up for good looks that ever I heard; most certainly she has no pretensions to beauty; and, as to rivaling Miss Fairfield in that respect—pshaw! Fairfield. Constantia is no subject for jest, let me tell you! When I asked you how you liked my sister, I meant how did you like her as a pretty good girl, altogether?"

"And I tell you that she takes my breath away with her unparalleled, her wonderful beauty!"

"I marvel if you are crazy, or sarcastic!"

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"I am in earnest—deeply in earnest——"

"When you say Constantia is good-looking?"

"When I say she is magnificently beautiful!"

"Heaven mend your taste! Why, she is too tall, too large, too dark!"

"So was that wondrous Queen of Egypt, for whom the demi-god, Marc Antony, lost the world!"

"Hum! Go to bed, Fairfield."

"She is the only Cleopatra I ever saw, or dreamed of!"

"You have been reading poetry. Good-night, Fairfield! Daylight, breakfast, and a fox-hunt to-morrow, will set you right! Go to sleep soon as you can."

He left me, evidently sincere in his natural brotherly blindness to his sister's superb style of beauty.

I was in fact dreadfully wearied out, and, as soon as he had left me, I threw off my clothes, blew out the candle, and jumped into bed.

I could not sleep.

The blazing hickory fire in the fireplace illuminated the whole room with a dazzling brilliancy that would have left sleep out of the question, even if a female face, beautiful as a houri, had not gazed mournfully at me from the wall opposite the blazing fire. It was Constantia's dark face, with less of dignity and more of love, more of sorrow, more of religion, in its expression. "The eyes were shadowy, full of thought and prayer." It was a Madonna countenance, and the longer I looked at it, the more I adored it. Yes! it was not a face to be passed over with mere admiration, however ardent that admiration might be—it was a face to be adored; and as I gazed upon its heavenly loveliness, something like religious devotion moved in my bosom, and almost impelled me to kneel before that image of divine beauty, love, and sorrow. I fell asleep, at last, with my imagination full of that celestial countenance and my soul full of prayer.

Suddenly I awoke with a start! It seemed to me that I had been aroused from slumber as by the shock of a galvanic battery. I trembled even after I was

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awake as with a vague terror, of which I should have felt ashamed had I not ascribed it to a hot supper and the nightmare. I looked around the room and upon the beautiful picture. The fire was burning down low, and the flame flashed up and down upon the opposite portrait, giving a convulsive emotion to the features, as of sobbing. I looked at the sorrowful sobbing face with a feeling of deep pity, as though it had been the living sufferer that it seemed. There was such an indescribable look of life, love, anguish, on the beautiful features, I felt a dreamy, mysterious, but intense desire to wipe away the tears from that pictured face. It was a good while before I could get to sleep. That beautiful countenance, silently convulsed in the firelight, fascinated me. If I determinedly closed my eyes, they would fly open again, and fix upon the pictured sufferer. Nay, even when my eyes were closed, the lovely face still present to my mind, and it seemed to me to be heartless to go to sleep with such an image of beauty, love, and sorrow before me. I was too imaginative. Well! the time, place, and circumstances, made me so.

At last I fell asleep indeed; but through my dreams still slowly moved the image on the wall—beautiful, good, loving, suffering, as I felt her to have been; and with her moved another being—a perfect specter, that might have been the consort of Death on the Pale Horse—an old, decrepid, livid hag, with a malign countenance and gibbering laugh, whose look chilled and whose touch froze my blood with horror. Suddenly a noise, a fall, a smothered cry, awoke me, and, starting up in my bed, I saw in the red firelight, between the chimney and the side of my bed, the very hag of my dream, livid! malignant! gibbering! struggling violently against Wolfgang Wallraven, who, himself an embodied typhon, with a wild, angry blaze in his light-gray eyes, held her.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

UNOBSERVED by him, I, after the first involuntary start, had fallen back upon my pillow.

The conflict was too unequal to last above a minute. It was a deadly, silent struggle. He evidently wished to secure without hurting her, or making the least noise. He quickly succeeded in mastering and bearing her out of the room.

Soon he came softly back. I was lying still; he evidently inferred that I was asleep; for, after throwing a quick penetrating glance at me, and looking hurriedly around the chamber, he silently retired, cautiously closing the door after him.

You may judge that I slept no more that night. I scarcely knew with certainty at what point to separate my sinister dream from the mysterious reality; and doubts, and even anxious fears agitated me. Who was that malign old hag? How came she in the dead hours of the night into my sleeping-room? What motive brought her there? How had Wolfgang known of her visit? Or, which had come first, and which had followed the other? Or, possibly, had they come together, and for what purpose? What meant that deadly struggle? What meant that look of agonized dread and terrible purpose upon the ghastly face of Wolfgang. The look of unutterable hatred and determined malignity upon the fiendish features of the beldame?

I am no coward, but I say that I turned ice cold with horror—not so much at what might have happened to either of the mortal foes, as at the passion silently raging in the bosoms of both.

All was dark and still in my room now. The lurid dull red glow of the smouldering coals on the hearth revealed nothing. Even the image on the wall was

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invisible in the deepening shadows of that darkest hour that precedes the dawn of day. I lay in the misery of an energetic acutely anxious mind, fretting itself against the forced inactivity of the body.

At length the unknown sounds that usher in the earliest dawn of morning began to be heard.

I arose, drew on my dressing-gown, and taking some dry oak logs from a wood pile near the fireplace, threw them upon the smouldering coals, which soon kindled them into a cheerful and genial blaze. As, however, the room was yet too dusky, I went to the windows to open the shutters. I had some difficulty in hoisting the windows and in pushing open the shutters, for they were blockaded with snow and ice. When I did so, however, the frozen snow fell rattling down to the ground, and the sudden dazzling sunbeams flashing in, nearly blinded me with light.

When I could look out, however, I saw that the dark and heavy clouds of the preceding day had not fallen in a deluge of rain as had been predicted, but during the still and silent hours of the night had noiselessly descended in one of those tremendous falls of snow that furnish paragraphs for the marvelous department of the newspapers of the day, and make data in the history of a lifetime. All around stretched fields of frozen snow, the great depth of which might be partly guessed at by the tops of high gate-posts sticking a few inches above the surface, and marking the site of a buried line of fence—fields of crusted and sparkling snow, which flashed off in undulating radiance to the circle of mountains that shut in this white, cup-shaped dell, and whose icy peaks scintillated against the cold, blue horizon. This vast snow-cup, snow-pit, snow-dell —flashing, sparkling, scintillating, dazzling, glanced brighter in the reflected rays of the morning sun than the winter sky above.

It was certain that we were immured in this snow-glen, within the confines of these closely circling and ice-cumbered mountains, for an indefinite number of days. There would be no fox-hunting that day, or

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that week. That was evident; that I did not regret. Not life without, but life within, the homestead, absorbed my thoughts, and I turned from the flashing fields of snow and glancing peaks of ice, to look upon the beautiful portrait on the wall, that had so powerfully attracted me during the night. I wished to examine it, to test its powers of fascination by sober daylight. I turned and looked for it.

It was gone!

I gazed, doubting my own eyes! It was certainly gone! No sign of a picture ever having been there—no pin, screw, or nail, or even hole in the wall, was to be seen! I looked all around in an almost ludicrous state of bewilderment.

I half suspected the whole train of sinister events of the past night to be merely the phantasmagoria of a midnight dream, or the creation of a morbidly excited imagination, and I began to make my simple morning toilet.

I had not got half through, when a rap at the chamber door arrested my attention, and to my "Come in!" entered old John—who seemed to be factotum to the household—with hot water, towels, and offers of service. I gratefully accepted the hot water and the towels, and as gratefully declined his assistance at my dressing-table.

He then informed me that breakfast would be on the table in half an hour, and left the room.

A quarter of an hour afterward, having given the last and most graceful wave to my temple locks, in honor of my superb Queen of Egypt, I descended to the hall.

As I entered the old wainscoted apartment—heated, as upon the previous evening, by an immense fire of hickory wood—I saw Mr. Wallraven, Wolfgang, and old John, standing on the broad hearth in deep and earnest conversation. "Secured"—"keep her own room"—were the broken words that fell upon my ear as I came in, when the trio suddenly separated at my approach, and Wolfgang came forward to meet me.

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He was dreadfully pale and haggard. He appeared really very ill. After glancing at me furtively and keenly, he spoke to me very affectionately, saying something about regretting that the inclemency of the weather should oblige us to postpone our hunt.

I told him there was no fear but what we should be able to amuse ourselves for the few days during which the snow would confine us to the vale.

"As how, my dear Fairfield—trapping snow birds and cracking hickory nuts; for that appears to be the only resource."

"Books, music, conversation, tales of olden times. Miss Wallraven——"

"Ah!" began Wolfgang; but before he could proceed with his threatened sarcasm, Old John appeared at the door, and announced breakfast.

I followed Wolfgang into the next room; and there we found a good fire, and a fine Virginia breakfast.

Mr. Wallraven was there, and, beside the servants, no one else. He invited us to be seated at the table, and we took our places. I was helped to coffee, buckwheat cakes, broiled partridge; but my attention was divided between the savory viands before me, and the door at my right hand, through which I hoped and expected every instant to see my "wondrous Queen of Egypt" enter. I wished so much to see her by daylight. At length I could bear the suspense no longer; and, turning to Mr. Wallraven, I asked,

"Are we not to have the happiness of Miss Wallraven's presence at breakfast, this morning?"

I was not answered immediately. I saw that both the old gentleman and Wolfgang changed color, and exchanged glances, as Wolfgang replied in a low tone of voice,

"My sister left home this morning, for an absence of several weeks."

I bowed, as in politeness bound; but how Miss Wallraven could have left home, through the avalanches and icebergs that blockaded us that morning, was a mystery to me.

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Without seeming to make any effort, both Mr. Wallraven and Wolfgang certainly exerted themselves to entertain me.

Thanks to their successful endeavors, the next week did not pass heavily, although we were confined almost entirely to the house and near grounds. A well-stored library; various musical instruments; backgammon, chess, cards, billiards; conversations with the old gentleman, who possessed a rich and highly-cultivated mind, a profound tone of thought, exalted sentiments, and a brilliant style of conversing; spars with the wilful but fascinating Wolfgang—filled up the hours of the short days.

My growing friendship for the old gentleman deepened almost into love; my esteem for him at least amounted to veneration! So patriarchal, so reverend, seemed his tall figure, his snow-white hair, and his clerical black suit—so full of Christian love and benediction seemed his serious smile and his sweet, grave tones. My reverence for the venerable father greatly augmented my respect, if it could not increase my affection, for the son; but—the mystery! the mystery! What was it? My mind sometimes naturally connected the midnight apparition of Wolfgang and the malign hag in the bed-chamber with the terrible secret of the family; and at other times I entertained a rational doubt as to whether the dread apparition were a dream or a reality. Since that first night, my sleep had been undisturbed.

The end of that week brought Christmas Eve, and also a considerable moderation of the cold and thaw of the snow, though the condition of the ground still precluded the possibility of a pleasant hunt.

Christmas day, we had a small party of gentlemen to dinner, and the long-talked of hunt was appointed for the next week. After dinner, and when these men were about to take their leave, we were all invited to return the visits upon any day that we should fix, and I, as a stranger, was pressed to do so. I observed that Mr. Wallraven, with a strange blending of humility

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and pride, courteously declined these invitations. These gentlemen, I heard long afterward, were a company formed for some enterprise, and that they were trying to negotiate the loan of a very large sum of money from Mr. Wallraven—an arrangement they finally succeeded in completing, much to their satisfaction, however little it might have been to Mr. Wallraven's interest.

Sunday after Christmas, Mr. Wallraven and myself attended Divine service at the Episcopal church of St. Stephen's.

Wolfgang remained at home.

After the sermon, Mr. Wallraven lingered until all the congregation had left the church, and then came out of his pew to meet the young minister, who was coming down the aisle to speak to him. They met as intimate friends who had a great respect for each other. Mr. Wallraven introduced him as the Rev. Mr. Davenport, and then they entered into a conversation for a few minutes. At parting Mr. Wallraven pressed the minister to come over and dine with him the next day —an invitation that he accepted.

The next day, Mr. Davenport and his wife—who by-the-way was not included in the invitation extended to her husband, came over to Hickory Hall. Mr. Wallraven received the clergyman with grave cordiality, and his amiable wife with scarcely concealed surprise and emotion. When we were once seated around the great fire in the old wainscoted hall, Mr. Davenport inquired with much interest for "Constance."

"My daughter is from home for a few weeks," replied the old gentleman.

Mr. Davenport expressed some regret at not being able to see her, and the conversation dropped, or rather changed. This day passed very pleasantly. The minister and Mr. Wallraven had a game of chess.

Mrs. Davenport—who was an amiable, intelligent, and interesting little lady—Wolfgang, and myself, played and sang trios, or two of us duets. We dined early; and early in the afternoon our visitors departed,

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having very reluctantly drawn from Mr. Wallraven a promise to dine with them on New Year's Eve.

The next day, being Tuesday, was the day of our great hunt. Mr. Davenport of course did not join in it, from that irrational and very deleterious custom which debars ministers of the gospel from amusements considered lawful and beneficial to the lay members of their congregation—thus separating religion from innocent, cheerful, and heathful pleasure, greatly to the disparagement of the former.

The party of gentlemen assembled early in the morning, and the neighing and prancing of the hunters, and the cries of the hounds, made a gay and enlivening scene. We set out very early, and had a highly exciting hunt, and a rather fatiguing day. It was late in the afternoon before the brush was taken.

Wolfgang Wallraven took it.

We returned to a sumptuous dinner at Hickory Hall. After the dessert, the guests sat long over the wine, and it was late in the night before they separated and left the house.

We were later than usual at assembling to breakfast the next morning. After breakfast we were reminded by a note from Mr. Davenport of our promise to dine at St. Stephen's parsonage upon some day of the current week, and invited for the next day.

Mr. Wallraven, after some considerable hesitation and evident reluctance, wrote to accept the invitation.

Accordingly the next morning we set out for the parsonage, distant some nine miles and where we arrived about eleven o'clock in the forenoon. We found the excellent clergyman and his wife friendly and hospitable as ever, but not so lively—struggling in fact to keep up a cheerfulness, which was evidently maintained by great effort.

The conversation, after some variety, turned upon church affairs, in the course of which Mr. Davenport inadvertently let escape him a hint that his congregation, especially his vestry, were much dissatisfied with him,

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and that to stay among them was now unpleasant as well as doubtful.

Then old Mr. Wallraven arose, and laying his hand solemnly and affectionately upon the shoulder of the young clergyman, said, in a low voice,

"I have long feared this, my excellent young friend! I know too well their ground of objection! Come with me. I would talk with thee apart!" and, excusing himself, Mr. Davenport arose, and they walked slowly away in earnest conversation together.

I caught these words—"My dear, disinterested young friend, you must not injure yourself by your indiscreet attachment to me. Already one dear, Christian friend has fallen a victim to his love for me and mine. This must not go on. Let me alone, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that let him reap." Thirty years of sufferance, that has whitened my hair like snow at fifty, has nevertheless accustomed me to my sorrow, and strengthened me to bear it? You must——"

The remainder of the speech died away, but at the distant bay window I still saw them in debate, the patriarchal old man, earnest, solemn, impressive; the tones and gestures of the young clergyman, energetic, denunciatory. I think that Mr. Wallraven convinced, at least, I know he silenced the minister; for, on returning to the fire, the old gentleman appeared satisfied, while Mr. Davenport seemed melancholy, and even, perhaps, remorseful.

When we left in the evening, no invitations were given on either side, and the parting itself was grave and sad.

Storm clouds were again mustering in the northwest, and we had a very brisk ride through the cold and darkening twilight, in order to escape, if possible, the storm of wind, snow, and sleet, that, nevertheless, when we were within half a mile of Hickory Hall, broke out upon us in boisterous fury. We reached the homestead at last, where the severity of the weather confined us for a week. After it moderated, we had an

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occasional guest at dinner, but went out visiting no more during our short stay.

Our time was passed, however, more agreeably than before. We were blessed with one of those clear, mild, and dry spells of weather, which sometimes visit us even in the dead of winter. We passed the remainder of our time—in the mornings, in sporting expeditions upon the mountains and in the forests from which we would return laden with game; in exploring expeditions among the wild and picturesque or awful and majestic scenery of the Blue Ridge, or in sails upon the Shenandoah; and in the evenings in games of various kinds, in music, books, or conversation.

We had another great hunt upon the last day of our stay, and the next morning we left Hickory Hall for the North.

I need not say that during my stay, throughout all the external circumstances of my visit, my thoughts and feelings were intensely interested in the sinister mystery that enveloped the unfortunate Wallravens, which nothing tended to elucidate, while everything helped to deepen.

"It is not to be supposed that all I had read and heard at Hickory Hall had not greatly increased my anxiety upon my sister's account. Another cause for uneasiness I had also. During my residence at Hickory Hall—and in fact from the time of my having written to Regina of my proposed visit to Virginia—I had not once heard from her. Notwithstanding I had written two or three letters I had received no answer. I fancied this proceeded from a feeling of resentment on her part, upon account of my visit; but I also feared that she might be ill or unhappy.

Upon reaching the University, however, I found one letter from her, bearing a recent date, awaiting me. She was well, had got all my letters, hoped I had enjoyed my visit to Virginia, coldly regretted that she had not had the pleasure of my society and that of my friend, Mr. Wallraven, at Christmas, but hoped to be compensated at the end of the ensuing term. That

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was the first time she had ever mentioned Wolfgang in any of her letters to me. I felt that she did so now only for the purpose of drawing me out. I felt it my duty to enlighten her as much as I was able, which you may judge was not much. I sat down and wrote her a long, long letter, filling six foolscap pages, and giving her a detailed account of all that had happened since my leave-taking of her—I mean actually all events in which Wolfgang was concerned. I folded and sealed this letter, and after leaving it in my desk all night, took it out, and—consigned it to the flames! By a change of opinion and feeling, irrational and erratic as any of Wolfgang's own, it appeared to me the work of a spy, to go into his domestic circle and expose all that I saw there to the worst construction, and that, too, to the woman whom he loved and esteemed above all others in the world. At least I determined to think again before I did this, and resolved never to do it unless circumstances strictly demanded it—unless, in fact, he should renew his suit to my sister, in the way of which I purposed to throw every sort of obstruction. I formed a resolution never again to go to Hickory Hall, and never again to invite Wallraven to Willow Hill. Do not suppose that I could determine upon this course without deep grief, for I dearly loved Wolfgang; and this very resolution, growing out of a sense of duty as it did, now served to deepen, as well as sadden, my affection for the strange fellow.

The current term was to be our last at the University. During the whole of this term Wallraven applied himself to study with unparalleled industry. It was predicted that he would take a very high degree; and when the end of the term came, this prediction was fulfilled in his highest success. He received marks of esteem from the most distinguished of the professors, and the warm congratulations of his companions. This eminent success had astonished even those who predicted great things for him, and, I think, surprised Wallraven himself, and—with honor of the distinguished, and the sympathy of the warm-hearted among

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his associates—combined to warm his stiff, cold, reserved nature.

Never had I seen him so nearly happy. He invited me to go with him to Hickory Hall, where he said he should spend some months previous to going abroad. I declined. Then he gave me every opportunity of returning the civility, which I omitted to do. I do not know how long my resolution would have held out; for his eminent success, the honor paid him, and, more than all, his own happy elated mood, were conspiring to bring about a hopeful change in my sentiments—had not a circumstance occurred to put all choice out of the question—an event that decided for time, perhaps for all eternity, the fate of my ill-starred sister, and overwhelmed my life with sorrow. I had not heard from Regina for a month, and was beginning to feel very uneasy. I grew anxious for the day when I should set out on my journey homeward, to meet her again.

Upon leaving the University at the end of the term, Wallraven and myself had taken up our abode temporarily at a hotel, where we were mutually engaged in preparations for our respective journeys, and where I was turning over in my mind the question of inviting or not inviting Wolfgang to Willow Hill.

It was the third day of our sojourn there, that Wallraven and myself were sitting together in a parlor that we occupied jointly, when, without any premonition whatever, the door was gently thrown open by a waiter, who announced Miss Fairfield; and, to my extreme astonishment, my sister Regina, weary and travel-stained, but fair and proud as ever advanced into the room!

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CHAPTER VII.

THE LOST PATRIMONY.

> Thou may'st not enter thy fair mansion house,
> Thou may'st not pull a sapling from thy hills,
> Thou may'st not set thy foot within the fields.—

"REGINA! my dearest sister! I am delighted and astounded to see you? Whence come you? How come you? But here! before you reply, take this easy-chair, and—give me your bonnet! Place your feet upon this footstool! You look weary! You rode all night! Who escorted you? Nay, do not answer! You look so exhausted! Have a glass of water, first, or—a cup of coffee? Wolfgang, my dear fellow!—but no! I will run!"

It was something like this tirade of ejaculations of astonishment, joy, love, and solicitude that I received my sister, placed her in the lounging chair, set a cushion under her feet, and ran off to order refreshments.

I was absent some fifteen minutes; and when I returned, followed by a waiter bringing in coffee, etc., and a chambermaid to take Miss Fairfield's wraps and receive her orders, I found Wolfgang standing by Regina's side, stooping over her with a countenance beaming with happiness, his left arm caressingly encircling her shoulders, his right hand clasping hers, and she no longer pale and weary, but blushing with pride and pleasure, as her radiant eyes were vailed beneath his ardent gaze. He drew off as we entered, and each resumed composure. Regina arose with her accustomed stately self-possession, and, attended by the chambermaid, retired from the room to refresh herself by a change of dress, saying to me, *en passant*, that I might countermand the waiter of refreshments, and, if we had not already breakfasted, she would join us at that meal. I said that we had not, and she left us.

Breakfast for three was served in our parlor, and in

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half an hour Regina entered, every vestige of fatigue and discomposure fled from her countenance and bearing, and she, attired in a plain, but rich, morning dress of India muslin, looking beautiful and gracious as ever.

During breakfast, I made no inquiries concerning the motive of her extraordinary journey at this particular time, when she knew I was so soon to return home. I rightly conjectured that she had a somewhat lengthy explanation to make; besides which, the waiter was in attendance, and we could have no confidential conversation in the presence of a servant.

When our meal was over, however, and when the waiter had removed the breakfast service, set the room in order, and retired, Regina seated herself in the easy-chair, placed her feet upon the footstool, summoned Wallraven and myself to her side, and, in a calm voice, and with a composed manner, informed us that our agent using the great power entrusted to him, had converted all our property into cash, and fled with it to the West Indies!—that, too, just when in a few weeks he knew he would be called upon to deliver up his trust! By this piece of unparalleled rascality, we were left—no, not "beggars" nor "penniless," quite. We might have between us, in pocket money, jewelry, and personal appointments, some five or six thousand dollars—that was all.

At first, I was too completely stunned by the news—not of our great loss, but of our attorney's great villainy—to feel the real sharpness of our misfortune.

I turned in despair and looked at Wallraven. How would he receive the news of his friends' calamity? When I first turned my eyes full upon him, taking him, as it were, by surprise, he looked positively aflame with joy! I had never seen any exhibition of triumph like that in him before! What did he mean? Before I had time to ask, his obstreperousness was reined in, and his features forced into an expression of gravity.

Regina further informed me that she had availed herself of the opportunity afforded by the journey of the Right Reverend Bishop L——, who was traveling

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north to the Convention, to join her brother; that she had written to warn me of her approach—a letter which, by the way, I had never received.

Miss Fairfield then excused herself, and left us to seek needful repose.

As soon as she had gone, Wolfgang, who had, with difficulty, restrained his excitement all this time, impetuously threw himself down beside me, and, clasping me as if I had been his sweetheart, exclaimed, vehemently——

"My brother! my heart! command my utmost powers and resources—command me! Half my father's wealth is mine when I demand it—it is yours when you want it!"

"Thank you, thank you, thank you. I am not overwhelmed by this misfortune, dear Wolfgang, though I am in danger of being so by your whole-hearted goodness."

"And will you let me serve you?"

"Not to the fanatical extent, or in the manner that you propose, my dear Wallraven! You are excited by this news even more than I am. My dear, generous fellow, be quiet. As you perceive, neither my sister nor myself is driven mad by this misfortune. I shall execute now, a plan that I have often thought of, even in my days of independence, and in doing so, enter a line of life for which I have at times had a very strong inclination."

"And what is that?"

"The Christian ministry! I shall immediately curtail every unnecessary expense, reduce my living to the severest economy, convert all my personal effects that can possibly be dispensed with into cash, and commence a course of theological reading."

"Fairfield, you constrain my admiration! Have you, then, no painful regrets for the past—no gnawing anxiety for the future?"

"None for myself."

"You astonish me!"

"But——"

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"Well?"

"For another——"

"Well? 'For another'—for whom, Fairfield? Have you been falling in love? though that could scarcely happen without my knowledge, as we have been so inseparable—but yet, is it so?"

"No, I have not fallen in love. Of course you know that; and you should know also that I speak of my sister!" said I seriously.

"Your sister!" he exclaimed, in what I thought a very natural surprise. "Your sister!"

"Certainly—my sister."

"And why, pray?"

"Is it so strange that I should feel anxiety for the future of Regina after this serious reverse?"

"No, certainly not—assuredly not! Excuse me! I—my thoughts fly occasionally, and I spake, perhaps, rather in reference to my own phase of mind, and from my own point of view, than from yours. Go on, dear Fairfield! Believe me, though my thoughts fly, they only circle round and round you and your interest, my brother. Go on, I pray you! Tell me all your causes for anxiety."

"Regina, then! I could very well support my sister in a small way; or, at a moderate outlay, I could establish her at the head of a new female academy—but——"

"Well, my dear friend?"

"Her haughtiness of heart unfits her alike for dependence upon me, or servitude of others. This lofty pride troubles me the more, that I have no sort of sympathy with it—cannot understand it fully; and, as far as I do, utterly condemn it. Human pride is folly, or insanity. The Saviour of the world——"

"Come, Ferdinand, my reverend friend! don't anticipate the privilege of the vestments! For myself, I adore the 'lofty pride' of Miss Fairfield. It is indissolubly entwined with the most exalted virtues, which could not exist without it!"

"You speak like a lover!"

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"I speak the truth. Her 'lofty pride' sustains the highest sentiments of truth, courage, generosity, fortitude!"

"I have never seen her 'fortitude' tested yet. It is that which I dread!"

"You 'have never seen her fortitude tested!' not even in this sudden and severe reverse of fortune?"

"No, only her courage is tested here. She met, but has not yet borne, the evils of this misfortune! Courage only meets calamity bravely; it takes fortitude to endure it strongly and patiently. Courage dares misfortune—fortitude sustains it; courage——"

"Courage is acute fortitude, and fortitude is chronic courage! you mean, medically speaking!"

"Fudge!"

"Certainly! I beg your pardon, Fairfield, for cutting short, both your sermon on pride, and your ethical and metaphysical essay on courage and fortitude, because the former was ill-timed, the latter essentially unphilosophical, and both would have run to, I know not what length! Now, then, let us return to the more attractive subject of Miss Fairfield. You were saying——"

"I was saying that I have no sympathy with my sister's pride! I do not understand it, and it troubles me for her future."

"And I repeat most emphatically, that I adore that pride!"

"You are an enthusiast!"

"I worship that pride—that lofty spirit, which is not assumption, nor arrogance, but a calm, majestic, unconscious assertion of her own inestimable worth! of her own essential, unalienable worth! of her own essential, unalienable royalty! the triune royalty of transcendent beauty, goodness, and genius!"

"Oh! you are mad!"

"'Honor to whom honor is due!'"

"Yes! but that is not to the haughty! He who spake those words, said also, 'The humble shall be exalted, and the proud shall be brought low'—'He that ex-

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alteth himself shall be abased;' and 'The meek shall inherit the earth.'—'Pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty temper before destruction.' You doubtless will give me more contempt for what you will consider weakness than credit for the fear of God; but I confess that these things trouble me for my dearest sister! It seems to me that her severe discipline has already begun! I do hope——"

"Pshaw! hush! Nonsense! Don't preach! You're not in the holy orders yet!" exclaimed Wolfgang, interrupting me, in a husky voice and with an agitated manner.

I looked at him in surprise.

He shuddered once or twice in his old way, got up and walked to the window, and said,

"It seems to me you are croaking this evening, Fairfield! to say nothing of a very unbrotherly severity to a trait of character in your only sister, which I for one cannot consider a fault, but must look upon with high respect, even when——"

He stopped abruptly.

"When carried to excess?"

"Yes! something of that sort!" he said, with an involuntary writhe of his beautiful lips.

A twinge of remorse wrung me for an instant. I felt that I had been severe with the foible of my dear Regina, and that it was not only ungenerous, but unjust, to speak of her fault in her absence; so I hastened to say,

"You know that I have no fraternal insensibility to my sister's noble character, Wolfgang!"

"Ah! you have! You do not see, do not acknowledge that it is pride that keeps that high, pure character so spotless from even conventional little meannesses!"

"Yes, I do! but I see also that 'pride' makes Regina sternly uncompromising, terribly intolerant of the little social and conventional meannesses and falsehoods of others!"

The effect of my words upon him was as fearful as

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unexpected! He blanched suddenly, dropped into a chair, and glared luridly from under the shade of his long black lashes at me, as if I had wilfully and wantonly outraged him.

I was about done with surprise at any eccentric motion of Wallraven; and fate, or something, impelled me to go on. "What is neither always reasonable nor Christian, her high-toned sense of honor, is morbid, even to mania. Deception, no matter how well, how logically defended, finds no tolerance with her. It would disgust her in a mere acquaintance; it would alienate her forever from a friend; and in one she loved pre-eminently, it would kill or madden her. I know and feel it. It is this that has terrified me for my sister! It is this that makes me shudder when I recall the fearful words, the thunder words—'Pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty temper before destruction!'" I suddenly felt a strong grasp upon my shoulder, and the husky, inaudible words,

"For God's sake, hush!" and Wallraven rushed out of the room.

"I have something to say to you, dear Ferdinand," said my sister Regina, laying her fair hand affectionately on my shoulder, and sinking softly into a chair by my side.

She looked so fair, so proud, so joyous, yet—so charmingly embarrassed.

"Why, how beautiful you are, Regina! Queen Blanche! Fair one with golden locks!" exclaimed I, in involuntary admiration and fondness. And she was! Dazzlingly beautiful! She had arisen, restored by her long morning sleep, refreshed by her cold bath, and dressed for dinner. She wore a very light blue silk, with fine lace falls to the short sleeves, and low corsage. Her splendid pale gold hair was rolled back from her snowy forehead and temples in shining bandeaus, and woven in a large knot behind. She had floated in and sunk down by me softly, lightly, gracefully, as a sun-gilded azure cloud, a vision of celestial beauty!

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"I have something to say to you, dear Ferdinand," she repeated, without deigning to notice my admiration.

"I listen, dear Regina," said I, seriously.

"Brother, I am engaged to be married to Wolfgang Wallraven."

I started to my feet, throwing off her hand by my violence, and exclaiming vehemently,

"No!"

"Are you surprised?" she serenely inquired.

"No, Regina! No!" I exclaimed, emphatically, without replying to her last observation.

"Yes, then, if I must repeat my declaration."

"No, it is not! it must not! it shall not be so."

"Why?" she asked, calmly, with scarcely a perceptible inflection of surprise and contempt in her tone.

"You must not—shall not—cannot marry Wallraven!"

"Will you endeavor to make yourself intelligible, Ferdinand?" she demanded, coldly.

"Wallraven cannot in honor marry you, and he knows it!"

Her snowy brow grew purple; she drew her proud crest haughtily up, and was preparing silently to rise and leave the room; when I laid my hand upon her with an imploring gesture, and rising, went and turned the key in the door, sat down by her side, and beseeching her by our fraternal love to listen to me with some little toleration, I began, and gave her a minute, detailed account of my whole confidential connection with Wallraven; commencing from our earliest school days; passing though our life at the preparatory school; through our college friendship; including our joint visit to Willow Hill, with the extraordinary scene in his chamber; and, lastly, my recent visit to Hickory Hall, with the frightful occurence in my chamber in the dead of the first night of my arrival. I ended with imploring my sister, as she valued her happiness, not to risk it by a marriage with him. For any other good purpose than that of doing my own duty and exoner-

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ating my own conscience, I might just as well have been silent.

Regina heard me through; though, as my story progressed, I saw her lip curl, and curl, with a slowly gathering contempt; and when I finished, she arose with flashing eyes, and answered me with a blasting, consuming scorn, anger, and defiance—accusing me of degrading suspicions—degrading to myself and to no one else—of treachery to my friend—of—I know not what besides; and expressing, with the air of an empress, her highest trust in Wolfgang Wallraven's unimpeachable purity and honor. In short, she replied to me as any other haughty, high-spirited woman would reply to aspersions so cast upon the man she deigned to accept.

I attempted a rejoinder; but resuming her sovereign self-possession, with a gesture full of high command, she silently indicated her will to leave the room; and I went to the door, unlocked, and held it open while she swept majestically through.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE BRIDE'S DOWRY.

I FELT myself relieved of a most disagreeable duty, which had been pressing upon me for some time, though certainly placed in a very unpleasant position. Loving Wolfgang and Regina almost with equal affection, and loving none others in the world but them, I wished their happiness above all things. Could their union have seemed likely to secure their felicity, I should have desired it more than any other event. But, from all I had seen and heard, I feared that it would end in misery to both; therefore I had sought to serve them best by attempting to break it off, and I had attained no better end than to deeply offend both my friend and sister. One lesson I learned, that it is useless and absurd to interfere between lovers who really love each other. I determined, however, to tell Wolfgang all I had said to Regina. I could not conceal this from him, for I could not have anything approximating towards a treachery upon my conscience.

The dinner bell rang in the midst of my painful cogitations, and mechanically, as a matter of habit, I sauntered down into the dining-room, and took my seat at the table.

Soon the door opened, and Wallraven entered with Regina on his arm, and they took their places, which were first and second above mine, Regina sitting between me and Wolfgang.

By nothing on Regina's fair, frosty brow, or in her usually calm, cold manner, could I perceive whether she were still angry with me.

Wolfgang looked black as the muzzle of a loaded cannon; but whether with anger, gloom, or both, I could not tell.

After dinner, a pair of horses were brought around, and Wallraven invited Regina to ride, to which she

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assented, and I was left to my unpleasant company and thoughts for the rest of the afternoon.

Very late in the afternoon they returned. Regina went to her chamber to change her riding-habit, and Wallraven came into our parlor, where I was still sitting. He rang the bell, and, throwing his whip, cap, gloves, etc., to the waiter, who entered, directed him to bring wine. I approached him.

"Wallraven!"

"Well!"

"I have something offensive to say to you!"

"Out with it, man!"

"You will be angry!"

"If I am, I shall knock you down first and forgive you afterward."

"That will be Christian, but dangerous. You are engaged to my sister."

"How do you know that?"

"She told me."

"Well, what then? you told me to win her if I could.

"Yes; but——"

"Well!"

"Circumstances have transpired since then——"

"You made no allowance for circumstances."

"I was wrong—hasty—very indiscreet!"

"Ah! well! 'circumstances have transpired!' To what 'circumstances' do you allude!"

"Among other things, the events of a night at Hickory Hall!"

Wallraven grew very pale, but commanded himself.

"Will you relate to me those events?" he asked, in a constrained voice.

"Certainly," replied I, and detailed to him the occurrences of my first night at Hickory Hall. To my surprise he looked infinitely relieved, though the laugh was unnatural with which he said,

"You cannot believe it possible that the turtle soup and deviled partridges gave you a horrible nightmare, can you?"

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"No, truly, I cannot. What I saw was real."

"Fairfield, when next you visit Hickory Hall, look into the library, and on the third shelf in the second arch on the right hand of the chimney-piece, you will find Sir Walter Scott's complete works. Select from among them his volume on Demonology, and read it with attention. I think it will do you good," said he, with a calm, deliberate manner.

"What I was about to say to you, Wolfgang, was this: I felt it to be my duty to my sister to inform her of all I know of your history, as well as to hint to her all I suspect!" And I looked, expecting him to explode. He was quiet as a bombshell untouched.

"Ah! you told her?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well, Wallraven, I implored her, as she valued her happiness, not to risk it by marrying you. I used every argument and entreaty in my power to enforce or persuade her to break with you——"

"And the result——"

"Was utterly unsuccessful."

"No more than that?"

"Yes; much more! I was totally defeated, routed, blasted by the lightning of her angry scorn, and I wonder that a bit of me is left to tell the tale!"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! I knew it!"

"I said everything I could say to your injury, Wolfgang, and, having done so, I come to tell you of it—not in defiance, but in frankness."

"God bless you, Fairfield! there! I believe that is the first time in all my life, at least since my angel mother went to heaven, that I have prayed! but happy love makes one grateful and devout. God bless you, Fairfield, for you were true to your sister, to my bride! my idolized Regina! You were right to tell her all you know, which was—nothing; and all you suspect, which was—something less! But, Fairfield, my dear fellow, having made up my own mind to marry her, it is quite settled! Let your conscience rest, for you cannot help

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it! What is your eloquence to mine, when I love her? What is the power of all men and devils over her, compared to mine, when she loves me? It is settled. All earth and hell could not part us now! It is settled. I wrote to my father this noon. I shall take my wife to Paris immediately after our marriage. I intend to make our home there for many, many years—perhaps forever? France is really the only civilized country in this barbarous world! Paris, only, is really enlightened! or, beginning to be. Yes! Paris shall be our home. Go with us, Fairfield, will you not?"

"No! to that modern Sodom I will never go. You, Wallraven, if I know you, will never like a place where the sanctity of home and hearth is unknown! You will be only, at best, a refugee in Paris—from what I suppose—nay, I hope—I may never know."

"Yes, you will know, some day, when I can tell you my humiliating secret proudly! Then you shall know!"

"God grant that you may be able to do so, Wolfgang, my brother!"

Regina at this moment entered the room, every sign of displeasure vanished from her radiant brow.

I made no further opposition. I crushed down in the bottom of my heart my foreboding fears, and tried to hope. Now that it was useless to look on the dark side, I turned resolutely to the bright one, which was really very bright. Wolfgang—young, handsome, talented, accomplished and wealthy—the distinguished graduate of the University, now radiant with the glory of his recent collegiate honors, adoring my sister and adored by her. Yes! I would look only on this side of the picture, where all was brilliant!

The next day we received a visit from Bishop L——, under whose care Regina had traveled North. He condoled with us upon our misfortune when he came, but congratulated us upon our firmness and gayety when he went away.

I promised to return his call; and accordingly upon the second day I did so, and took that opportunity of

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informing him of my sister's contemplated marriage with Wolfgang Wallraven, and of unfolding to him my desire to enter a course of theological reading for the purpose of taking holy orders. I told him how long this had been on my mind, how long, even before I dreamed of a possible loss of fortune.

He highly approved my design, and placed his library at my service, inviting me at the same time to return with him to the South, and take up my abode for the present at his house.

There were many reasons why I should feel no scruple in accepting the assistance of the venerable old man. He had in his youth been indebted to my grandfather for his own education, and subsequent establishment in the Church in which he had risen to such high honor. Now, in his age, he had wealth, a large house, an extensive library, and but a small family, consisting of his wife, one son and a daughter. He seemed very anxious to assist me, and soon overruled my faint objections.

I told him, however, that it would be impossible for me to return with him, or go South at all, until after my sister's marriage, when I promised to do so.

When I returned, I found that Wallraven and Regina had walked out together. They did not return until the dinner hour.

I pass over two weeks, the mornings of which were spent in walking, or riding out, or reading, music or conversation at home; and the evenings, in attending lectures and concerts abroad, or in some social pastime in our own parlor.

Regina was proudly, though bashfully, joyous.

Wallraven exhibited a haughty and happy self-consciousness, that became him greatly. Every day his step was more stately and elastic, his eye more steady and commanding. The regnant spirit was assuredly triumphant now!

At the end of two weeks, early one morning, he entered my chamber and laid before me two papers, indicating the one that I should read first.

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That was a letter from his father, Mr. Wallraven, giving consent to his marriage, and filled with affectionate expressions of regard for his bride and earnest prayers for the happiness of both, regretting that his infirmities must prevent his traveling North to be present at their marriage, and pressing Wolfgang to bring his wife to Hickory Hall immediately after the ceremony. His letter ended with a message of affection and esteem for myself, a fervent tender of service, and an invitation to accompany my sister and and her husband to Virginia. The letter was like the old gentleman himself, full of delicate beneficence, exalted love and magnanimity, yet through all betraying an undertone of sadness, solemnity, almost gloom. I was deeply affected on reading it.

Wolfgang slipped it from my hand, and placed the other paper before me.

This was the attested copy of a deed settling one hundred thousand dollars on Regina Fairfield. I read this twice, or thrice, before I looked up to see Wallraven leaning over my chair with an expression of generous satisfaction.

"Why, what is the meaning of this, Wallraven?" inquired I, with the feeling and the tone of embarrassment.

"It means to express my own and my father's deep sense of the high honor Miss Fairfield confers upon us in bestowing her hand on me!" he replied, in a sad, earnest, and somewhat bitter tone.

"But this is wrong, utterly wrong, Wallraven. Regina's whole fortune now does not amount to more than three thousand dollars—a sum scarcely sufficient to provide the *trousseau* of a Wallraven bride. If you will have her, in the name of heaven take her; but do not think of giving so much where nothing is given in return."

"She gives me her priceless self," he answered, almost mournfully; then, after a short pause, added, "I am glad that it is so. I am glad that she is dowerless. I would confer everything upon my bride; receive

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nothing from her but her love, and still be her debtor, and still tremble for——oh, God!" he ejaculated, abruptly pausing.

"Regina herself, for the reason that she brings you no property, will object to receiving this munificent settlement."

"She must not! It is the time-honored custom of our family. It has always been the rule of the Wallravens to settle that dower upon the lady whom their heir should select as a bride, and who should respond to his love. Her fastidiousness must make her no exception to this rule. Indeed, her refined delicacy and pure, high pride, will prevent her seeing the matter as you do. She will not for a moment degrade her sentiments by mixing them up with these subjects!"

It was thus that the wayward and erring, but generous fellow ever deified even the greatest faults of his betrothed. I felt, when he spoke, that, with all his eccentricities, he was so much better than Regina as to be utterly blind to one thing which was quite apparent to me: namely, that as some diseases infect the whole physical system, so pride pervaded the whole mental and moral being of Regina Fairfield. Pride was the life of her love for Wallraven. Had not Wolfgang Wallraven been the eldest son and heir of an ancient and immensely wealthy Virginia family, living in her own old ancestral neighborhood—had he not been singularly handsome in person, graceful and dignified in manners, brilliant and profound in conversation, and endowed with genius that gave promise of an illustrious career—he never could have made so deep an impression upon Regina Fairfield's imagination and heart.

While seeing this, I saw in every glance, tone, and gesture of Wolfgang, that he must have worshiped her under any circumstances. How passionately fond of her he was! How entirely devoted to her service! How patient—he, the wilful, haughty, sarcastic Wolfgang—how patient of her arrogance, her cold exactions! It always seemed to me that my beloved Regina walked in the moral illusion in which she had

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been brought up, as if the world had been created for her use and the people for her service. She accepted the most arduous and unremitting, and even the munificent marriage settlement, with such real and sovereign *nonchalance*, as such a mere matter of course, deserving neither acknowledgment, gratitude, nor remembrance. And this regal indifference, which would have grieved me deeply, had I been in Wallraven's place, never affected him in the least.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE VICTIM BRIDE.

"A dream is on my soul!
I see a slumberer crowned with flowers, and smiling
As in delighted visions, on the brink
Of a dead chasm!"—HEMANS' VESPERS OF PALERMO.

THEIR marriage day was at length fixed for the next Thursday fortnight. Bishop L—— was to perform the ceremony, immediately after which we were to set out for Hickory Hall.

Wallraven had intended to go immediately to Paris, but Regina had expressed her will that they should, according to the wish of the old gentleman and the time-honored custom of Virginia, spend the honeymoon in retirement, at the patrimonial house of the bridegroom, Hickory Hall.

Wallraven hesitated, looked disturbed, made—I know not what sort of excuse for opposing this plan.

Regina good-humoredly persisted in her purpose.

Wallraven expostulated seriously.

Regina was charmingly immovable.

For the first time in their lives, Wallraven decidedly vetoed her will, and gave it his final determination, for reasons of the utmost moment, to proceed to Paris. Wolfgang gave this decision in a firm, grave, though affectionate tone; but Regina became extremely offended. Finally—

Wallraven bowed his will to hers, and retired to his chamber with a gloomy brow, to write and accept his father's invitation, and prepare them to receive us.

Wolfgang remained in his room all the forenoon; and so, when I wished to speak to him—thinking that he had surely long finished his letter—I went to his door, and, according to our usual familiar and unceremonious habit with each other, without rapping, entered his room.

He was so closely engaged in writing—so absorbed,

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in fact—that he did not perceive my entrance until I had approached the side of his chair, and had involuntarily seen that he had reached the fifth page of a foolscap letter.

I spoke to him.

He started, thrust the letter into his writing-desk, and turned around. He looked paler, more gloomy, than I had seen him look for six months, or more.

He told me that, in consequence of the change of plan by which we were to go to Hickory Hall, instead of abroad, he had written, among other things, for his sister Constantia to come on and be present at his marriage, inquiring of me, with much interest, how I supposed Miss Fairfield would like Constantia.

I told him what I thought, namely—that Regina could not fail to admire and love Miss Wallraven.

He seemed pleased, and then I reminded him of an engagement he had made to ride with me that afternoon. He smiled mournfully—said that it had escaped his memory, but that he would soon be ready.

From this time it was evident that Wallraven's cheerfulness was gone. He had apparently purchased peace with his bride at a very dear and dangerous rate. His gloom deepened day by day, or was varied only by fitful flashes of false gayety, or spasms of sharp anxiety. These evil symptoms, however, were never betrayed except in the absence of Regina. In her presence he would always resolutely command himself, and act a gay tranquillity which was far from his real state of feeling. I do not know whether Regina penetrated his mask or not. If so, she never permitted me to see that she did.

She was certainly very much pleased with the prospect of going to Hickory Hall, and of having Constantia Wallraven for a bridesmaid and a traveling companion. Smiling, she said to me one day,

"Do you know, Ferdinand, what makes me so wicked about this matter of going to Hickory Hall? It is to see that fine old Virginia gentleman, whom I shall love as a father, and whose love I wish to win. I cannot

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bear the idea of going to France without even setting eyes upon him whom I love to regard as a second father. I do not care if the old Hall is tumbling down! There is a certain prestige of old respectability about that dilapidated building, which does not always surround a smart-looking new tenement, however large and costly."

Then turning to Wallraven, she said,

"Such an absurd mistake of your highness, my Prince of Darkness! that of supposing that I should be shocked at the worn appearance of the old house!"

The day previous to her wedding-day she come into my room. Smiling and sinking softly in a chair at my side, she said,

"Oh! Ferdinand, I am so well pleased, Wolfgang has a letter from his father, and now it is certain that Miss Wallraven will be with us this evening, and attended by—whom do you suppose? her twin brother, Constant, Wolfgang's younger brother! You never told me of him!"

"I knew nothing about him! What a queer, silent fellow your *parti* is, Regina! I wonder how many other brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins are to turn up."

"Oh, none! This Constant, who is a year younger than Wolfgang, has been for twelve months traveling in Europe, and has recently returned."

"Ah! and they come this evening?"

"Yes! Ah, Ferdinand! I shall have a sister, I do not care for Constant much. I do not care for the brother I shall gain, for I have already one dear brother; but I care very much for the father and the sister I shall have. I have been lonely, Ferdinand. I have borne within my bosom a cold heart, because I have had no mother or sister to keep it warm. For some reason or other, I never formed a female friendship in my life. I never could bring myself to make advances to other young ladies, and something within me repelled others from making advances to me. I have, with all my independence, needed that sisterly relation. Generally,

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I have been cold and strong enough; yet sometimes I have felt myself suddenly droop, with an utter weakness, for the want of some gentle woman friend whom I could love, whom I could trust. Now, in the failure of a sister of my own, my husband's sister will become inexpressibly dear to me; at least, I feel as if it would be so. I think it will be her own fault if it be not so."

I wondered to hear Regina speak so. It was the first glimpse, with one exception, that I had ever had of the heart within her cold bosom. Yes, I wondered, until I remembered that under the snow of earliest spring the grain still germinates unseen in the warm and genial soil.

That evening, according to appointment, Mr. and Miss Wallraven arrived.

In the bustle of their arrival, I had little opportunity of making observations.

After supper, however, when we were all—the three Wallravens, Regina and myself—assembled in our parlor, I had every facility for studying my prospective relatives.

First, I saw that Regina was more than satisfied with the new brother and sister.

Constant Wallraven was nearly the fac-simile of Wolfgang—the same tall, slight, elegant figure, the same haughty set of the head, the same light-gray blazing eyes, the same wilderness of slightly curling, silky black hair, jet black eyebrows, and long, black lashes. But he looked stronger, older, and more settled than Wolfgang. He looked as if at some time not far distant in the past, he had been just such a chaotic assemblage of discordant elements as Wolfgang now was; and as if some mighty power had forcibly subdued the chaos, bringing out of it a world of harmony, beauty and strength. Withal, there was an expression of frankness, good humor, and health of mind and body on his handsome face, which testified that the transforming power, whatever it had been, had not crushed but disciplined him. Only by the perfect

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repose, perfect harmony of these antipathetic elements of character betrayed in his features and complexion, could one judge of the pre-existence of a disciplining experience. One saw in him now a man who, though still quite young, had gained the great victory of his life; whose manner of existence and work was henceforth defined, laid out, and well understood.

I felt instinctively a high respect for, and a strong attraction to Constant Wallraven, as to a soul more exalted than my own.

Constantia was the same dark, majestic, superbly beautiful woman I had seen her by night at Hickory Hall. I do not know that my artist taste was ever so highly gratified as by comparing these two young girls, Constantia and Regina, both so perfectly beautiful, yet so opposite in their forms, features, and complexion; yes, and style—though both were of the queenly order. Constantia's was a natural dignity, Regina's a conventional stateliness. Upon the whole, we were all pleased with each other, and it was on the stroke of twelve before we parted for the night.

Once or twice I had observed an unwonted thoughtfulness upon the usually clear, open countenance of my sister; but that was so natural under the circumstances, that it made no impression on my mind. When I had retired to my room, however, and before I had time to begin to take off my dress, I heard a tap at my room door, and, thinking that it was of course Wolfgang, I bade him come in. The door opened, and my sister entered, and sunk softly down in her usual seat, near my dressing-table. I looked at her inquiringly, anxiously. The stately gayety which had distinguished her all the afternoon and evening had quite gone and the thoughtfulness that had once or twice, cloud-like, flitted past the sunshiny snow of her countenance, was now settled into a profound gloom.

"My dear Regina, you look so grave! but then this is a serious time to you!"

To my astonishment, she burst into tears, and dropped her head upon my dressing-table.

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"Regina, my dear sister, what is this? Tell me?" But she sobbed on.

"Regina, you alarm and distress me! What is this?"

But she sobbed on, and I sat down by her side, took her hand and pressed it, while I waited silently for her to tell me the subject of her grief. When her fit of weeping had expended itself, she lifted up her head, dried her eyes, and, after remaining silent and still for a little while, she said,

"You think me now sentimental, maudlin, sickening. I feel that you do. I am not that. I never was so. You ought to know it."

"I do know it, my dearest sister; and sentimentality is the last fault I should suspect you of. I know that you are strong, cool, and spirited—therefore I have been the more surprised and distressed at your tears this night. I know that it is natural—nay, generally inevitable—that a girl should drop some—not very bitter—tears on bidding good-by to her maiden life and liberty; but I scarcely expected to see you do so, inasmuch as you have less to regret, and more to hope for, than most young maidens similarly situated—nevertheless, I suppose these 'natural tears' must fall!" said I, gently caressing her.

She replied mockingly,

"Ah! it is quite proper for a bride to weep, then? Like the ring and the white kid gloves, it is an indispensable ingredient in the wedding-dish!—It is understood and expected of us, in short—and people would be shocked and disappointed if it were omitted."

"Regina—sister," said I, tenderly.

"Certainly! Half the trashy songs I learned to sing at school were—not after my own taste, the martial—but such mawkish ditties as the 'Bride's Adieu,' etc."

"Humph! Wolfgang's queerities are certainly contagious; that I know of my own experience," said I; and I dropped suddenly into a short reverie upon the contagion of resemblance between persons of no con-

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sanguinity who love each other and are constantly associated.

Feeling too deeply interested in my sister's emotions to indulge, even for five minutes, in this tempting subject, I turned, stole my arm around her waist, and said, gently,

"Regina, my dearest sister, to-morrow I will scarcely have a right to do this," and I gathered her to my bosom, and pressed my lips to hers. "To-morrow, certainly, I shall have no right to question your happiness, or the state of your affections; do not, therefore, be proud or cold towards me, like your worse self; and do not be sarcastic, bitter, or satirical towards me, for that is not like yourself at all. That you have caught from Wolfgang; but, tell me, what has so deeply, strongly moved you this evening? It is not an imaginary grief, nor a real one, if slight, that could trouble you so much—what is it then?

She did not reply; but remained in my lap with her arms thrown up over my shoulders, and her face over my bosom.

I spoke again.

"You have apparently less to alloy your happiness than almost any other bride. You have less to regret and more to hope for. You leave no dear, familiar home, no honored father, no beloved mother, no dear sister—wherefore should you grieve?"

"I leave you, my dearest brother! I leave you the sole remnant of our family circle! I leave you who stood to me for father, mother, sister, home!"

"Yet leaving me, dearest Regina, should not cost you a sigh! nay, it will not! Dearly as we have ever loved each other, we have not been together much; therefore you will still remember and love me, without throwing away a sigh upon my absence."

"Yes! so you have judged my heart! You have studied me so well!" she replied, almost bitterly. "The one thing I looked forward to in life was a reunion with my only brother, Ferdinand—and you know it was the main topic of all my letters; yet now you

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judge me able to part with you for a long, indefinite time—perhaps forever—without pain."

"At least, so I would have it, dearest sister. I am not so selfish as to wish you to regret my absence!"

"But I should regret it! I shall regret it, if I cannot persuade you to go with us, as I hope to do! as I must do!

"As you will not do! But it is not I for whom or by whom you sorrow now! Tell me, then, what it is, dearest sister, while it is not yet to late! To-morrow—yes! in seven hours from this—for it is now one o'clock—I shall have no right to ask you!"

"I will tell you, then. My heart is dreadfully oppressed! Oh, how I do wish that I had a mother, an aunt, a married sister, a matronly friend—any wise gentlewoman, upon whose bosom I could lay my head as I lay it now on yours, and ask her in a whisper if upon the eve of her bridal day she was visited with such terrible forebodings as I am now—such anxieties—such funereal presentiments!"

"How long has this been so with you, Regina?"

"Oh! for days, or rather for nights past—in the daytime I have been amused, and forgetful, but at night, as soon as I get to sleep, I start from my first sleep in a terrible panic! just as a condemned criminal might be awakened out of deep, sweet sleep, with the sudden recollection that he was shortly to be hanged. To-morrow is my wedding-day; yet it terrifies me as though it was the day of my execution! I do not believe Madame Roland and the heroines of the Reign of Terror dreaded the guillotine half as much as I dread the altar!"

Gloomily as my sister spoke, or, perhaps, because she did speak so gloomily of what appeared to me to be only considerable exaggeration of a very natural feeling, for the life of me I could not help laughing, in which, to my surprise, I was joined by Regina, who raised her head from its resting-place, and, arising from my lap, sat down beside me.

"I would be an old maid, then, if I were you.

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There is no law against it, and this is a free country!" said I.

"I know it is foolish—this presentiment——"

"Presentiment!"

"Yes, presentiment—this dark, uncertain, slippery, cold feeling of the precipice edge!" she replied, gravely—her flush of mirth quite gone.

"But this will pass away in a few days, Regina. You love Wolfgang."

"Yes, and dread him more! Oh! listen, Ferdinand! Listen, my dear brother! I will open my heart to you this first and last time! for once! for to-morrow, as you say, you will have no right to inquire into the secrets of my bosom. I will have no right to communicate them to-morrow; this would be an infringement of my marriage vow; to-morrow my oath of allegiance would make these confidences treachery. Listen then. I do love Wolfgang quite as much as I am capable of loving any one—almost as much as he loves me. I have loved him almost from the first evening of our meeting; but, since our engagement, lately—now listen! for, contradictory as what I am now about to tell you may appear, it is nevertheless true—though inexplicable to me, as it may seem to you. Lately, as I said, while I am strongly attached to Wolfgang, I am as strongly repulsed! It is as if some principle in my being were powerfully drawn toward him, while another principle was as powerfully repelled; or, as if some element in Wolfgang's nature possesses for me irresistible fascination, while some other element affects me with disgust—which fills me with remorse—which I endeavor to conquer—which I only succeed in concealing!"

"You have succeeded in that! I never suspected it!"

"Thus, you see, my bosom is made the battlefield of warring emotions, and over all broods this dark presentiment, like the lowering black clouds of some approaching and destructive storm!"

"Do not marry him!" said I, earnestly.

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"I must. The hand of fate is on me! I have no power to stop myself!"

"Then I can stop you! I can be stronger than fate! You shall not be married!"

"But I will! I love him! If I had the power I would tear out from my bosom that which occasionally recoils from him, though it were one ventricle of my heart! It is half-past one o'clock; my marriage-day has come, dearest brother; dearest, only brother! I only came in to kiss you."

"To give me an opportunity, for the last time, of pressing my maiden sister to my bosom," said I, as I held her there.

"Yes! and with no intention of afflicting you with my equinoctial storms——"

"Your—what?"

"My equinoctial storms—the clouds, the thunder, lightnings, and showers, that have marked my approach to the line matrimonial!" And dashing clouds and tears from her now sparkling face, she kissed me and vanished from the room.

In the silence of the night, after she had left the chamber, I heard the pattering of rain-drops against the windows. I went to them and looked out, and found the sky black and lowering with clouds, and the streets drenched with rain. I turned away, and at last throwing off my clothes, lay down to try to sleep. My spirits were heavily oppressed. There is nothing more disheartening than to feel some evil fate impending over those we love, and to know ourselves powerless to avert it. However, wearied out, and lulled by the sedative pattering of the rain-drops, I fell into a dreamless sleep, and slept till morning.

It was a dark, drizzling, dull morning. At seven o'clock we met in the parlor, to go together to church. We had ordered breakfast at eight. The stage in which we had engaged places was to start at nine. Wallraven looked happy and—frightened, and seemed to strive for self-command.

Regina's countenance, like a spring sky, seemed all

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the brighter for her equinoctial storm, She wore a beautiful dress of full white blonde over white satin, with fine lace trimmings, and pearl bracelets and necklace on her arms and neck, and a pearl bandeau turning back her blonde hair, and fastening a large, floating, mist-like veil. Miss Wallraven was attired in a somewhat similar style. Again I was struck by the contrast presented by these two young women—the blonde and the brunette—both so dazzling, beautiful, yet so unlike. One, clear, bright, morning sunshine—the other, resplendent starlight.

We stepped into the carriage, and were driven to the church. We found Bishop L—— punctual, waiting for us. We ranged ourselves before the altar, Constant and Constantia acting as groomsman and bridesmaid, and I giving away the bride.

After the ceremony was over, we returned, accompanied by Bishop L——, to breakfast, and in an hour afterward, bidding adieu to our venerable friend we took our seats in the stage and set out upon our journey to Virginia. The rain ceased and the sun shone out at noon.

It had been arranged among us, as the season was very beautiful, and certain parts of the country through which our roads lay very picturesque, that we should travel leisurely, taking a week for the journey.

At Washington we found the large family carriage of the Wallravens, that had been sent to meet us there, and that had been waiting for us for several days. We remained in the city two days, to visit the Capitol, Navy Yard, Government Departments, etc., and the third day entered the capacious and comfortable traveling carriage, and set off for the Blue Ridge and Hickory Hall. This journey, from Washington to the Blue Ridge, was one of the most delightful journeys I ever took. Our carriage was not only convenient, it was luxurious. We were attended by our own servants, took our own route, and kept our own hours. We managed to be six days on a route that we might have traveled in two. Sometimes, at sunrise, after an early

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breakfast, we would leave the inn at which we had passed the night, and travel leisurely but twenty miles through some picturesque country, reach another quaint country inn by noon, eat dinner, and, after an hour's repose, order saddle horses, spend the afternoon in excursions about the neighborhood, return to tea, and occupy the evening in conversation, or books and music, with which we were provided. We would sleep then, and the next morning, resume our journey, which would be continued with some pleasant new variation. Miss Wallraven and myself were thrown very much together, I found her mind and heart as rich and well cultivated as her person was beautiful and her manners charming. I admired her with enthusiasm; yet, not for one moment was I in the slightest danger of falling in love with her, even if there had not been something in her manner that politely kept me at a certain distance. As for Regina and Wolfgang, they behaved very much like any other bride and groom upon their wedding journey—they seemed fond, and shy, and tremulously happy.

In approaching the mountains, and the old neighborhood of the Northern Neck, first settled by her ancestors, Regina became deeply interested in features of the landscape and the local history of the country. Upon reaching any high point on the road, she would order the carriage to be stopped, and while she surveyed the extensive and varied landscape, with its far-apart country-seats and farm-houses surrounded with their little town-like groups of out-houses and negro quarters, and while she picked out with her quick and scrutinizing glances the oldest homesteads of the old settlements, she would ask of Constant Wallraven a score of questions about their first proprietors. The public and private history of many families she knew by fireside traditions, so as to recognize them as soon as they were named, and look with another and a deeper interest at the places of their habitation.

On approaching, however, that grand pass of the Blue Ridge, known as the Bear's Walk, the historical

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and traditional interest of the country gave place in her mind to a rapt enthusiasm, as she gazed, silenced and transfixed with admiration and awe, upon the sublime and even savage aspect of nature.

It was the fifth day of our journey that we began to ascend the great pass of the Bear's Walk, from the highest point of which Regina gained her first view of Hickory Hall, and saw it under the most favorable circumstances, and in the most favorable light, namely:

We had ridden slowly that day, only fifteen miles, and through the most sublime and beautiful scenery in the world; and now, quite fresh, we found ourselves in the middle of a lovely summer afternoon, upon the summit of the mountain-pass, and gazing down with delighted surprise upon a scene of almost ideal beauty, not to be equaled on earth.

I wondered at the enchanting transformation made by a different and more genial season, and another and a brighter hour. The scene which on a dark, tempestuous winter night had seemed a Gehenna, a Hades, to me, now, in the light of a summer day, appeared a Happy Valley, a Garden of Eden—Elysium itself.

A cup-shaped, small, and deep green vale, shut in by a circle of high mountains. Deep in the bottom of this green vale, gem-like, was set the old hall, where, in the beams of the evening sun, it glittered and flashed with the ruby luster of long-exposed red sandstone; around it spread green pastures, embossed with white flocks of sheep; beyond these waved yellow fields of grain, ripe for the sickle; around them passed a girdle of forest trees—behind which arose the circle of intense blue mountains, with their summits against the transparent golden horizon. Through all ran the clear mountain stream, which, springing from a rock at our feet, and leaping down the side of a precipice, glided, flashing in the sun, through the mist of the beautiful vale. Over all smiled the most radiant sky—shone the most splendid sun, I had ever seen.

"How beautiful! how beautiful! It is a terrestrial Paradise!" exclaimed Regina, with enthusiasm.

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"But," inquired she of Constant Wallraven, while scrutinizing the old hall, "why does not your father repair, or rather rebuild, the house?"

"My father thinks of selling the property."

"Of selling that Eden!"

"Yes! and we all think it the best plan, under existing circumstances."

The difficult descent of the precipice interrupted further conversation. The road, however, was in its best condition, and in twenty minutes we had reached the bottom, and soon after drew up before the door of Hickory Hall.

Mr. Wallraven, with the same suit of black, contrasting so strongly with his snow-white hair, with the same venerable appearance, the same social and stately bearing, advanced from the hall to receive us.

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CHAPTER X.

THE HAG.

A fearful sign stands in thy house of life.
An enemy ; a fiend lurks close behind
The radiance of thy planet : oh, be warned !—COLERIDGE.

WOLFGANG, alighting, handed out Regina, and leading her up the stone steps, presented her with stately and affectionate courtesy. We all followed in turn, and were welcomed in the most cordial manner.

Mr. Wallraven conducted Regina into the house. I followed, with Miss Wallraven upon my arm. Constant and Wolfgang paused behind an instant, and, as I turned to look after them, I saw old John at the end of the portico, and beheld Wolfgang step up to him, and heard him inquire, rapidly, under his breath,

"Is she safe?"

And the low reply,

"All secure there, sir!"

"That is well! I shall remember your care for us, John."

The old man bowed in silence, and Wolfgang immediately stepped after us. This little interlude had not occupied ten seconds.

We entered the hall, and were each immediately shown to our separate room.

Old John took me into a different chamber from that which I had occupied before, telling me with a slight smile, that my former sleeping apartment had been prepared for Mrs. Wallraven, as it was the most comfortable one in the house.

He then went and ordered up my baggage, and in the course of half an hour, with the help of John I had refreshed myself with a bath, a shave, and a change of dress.

I even went down into the old oak hall, which had been furbished up in honor of the bride's arrival—that is, the oak floor and paneled wall had been rubbed,

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waxed, and polished, until they shone with a mirror-like luster, and the wide fireplace had been filled with cedar branches, while on the mantel-piece and on the window-sills were placed vases filled with white lilies, Regina's favorite flowers.

I found in the drawing-room, with Mr. Wallraven and Constant, Mr. and Mrs. Davenport, and two young ladies, their cousins—all of whom had come over to Hickory Hall to meet our bridal party.

In a few minutes Wolfgang and Regina entered, and it was evident her dazzling fairness and stately grace, her whole high, pure style of beauty and of bearing, made what is called a great "sensation," though on a small scale—namely, the small party met there to welcome her.

Soon after the introductions were over, dinner was announced. Well! this dinner was like most other Virginia country wedding dinners—more abundance than elegance, and more hospitality than ostentation.

Soon after an early tea, the Davenport party took leave, previously inviting the Wallravens and myself to dine at the parsonage the third day from that—an invitation which Wolfgang accepted in the name of the whole family.

When they were gone, we returned from the portico, where we had been standing to see them off, and re-entered the hall.

It was a pleasant place in a summer evening twilight. There were many windows, commanding various sublime and beautiful views, and soft, warm, pleasant airs, and the sweet, vague musical sounds came through them.

I noticed Wolfgang and Regina seated at one of the end windows enjoying the delicious hour without conversation, or only conversing by seeking each other's eyes, or by an occasional low tone.

When the full harvest moon arose, Mr. Wallraven invited us all to come out and walk, and view the scenery by moonlight. With the same stateliness of an old-school gentleman, he gave his arm to Regina,

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and led the way. Each member of the family vied with each other in assiduous yet delicate attentions to our bride. We spent an hour very pleasantly in strolling through the beautiful and moonlit vale, and then returned to the drawing-room, where refreshments were ordered.

While we were standing around the center-table in gay conversation, (never before had I seen any member of the family so cheerful,) old John appeared at the door with an anxious expression upon his time-worn face.

Mr. Wallraven arose in haste and went out to him. Constantia turned pale, and Wolfgang glared at the intruder with starting eyes and a scowling brow.

I saw that some misfortune had occurred, or was about to occur.

Mr. Wallraven closed the door behind him while talking with the old man; while Wolfgang, as if lost in the sense of other presence, continued to strain his gaze after them.

In a moment, Mr. Wallraven put his head in the door, and beckoned Wolfgang. He started up and shot from the room, without a word of excuse or apology, banging the door to after him. Constant and myself were left alone with the two young ladies.

Regina looked in surprise from the brother to the sister, and then, with her habitual self-possession and politeness, lowered the blaze of the solar lamp so as to throw a soft light upon the table, and, taking up an engraving, made some critical remark upon its merits, submitting it to Constantia's judgment.

But Constantia was pale, trembling, and *distrait*, and gave some reply wide of the mark.

Constant, however, with a deferential "Permit me, madam," took, and, with Regina, examined the picture. Constant was pale and stern, and seemed to have mastered the betrayal of some strong emotion.

They criticised the picture, which was "The Writing on the Wall.

Regina, Constant, and myself, might have passed a

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tolerable hour, had it not been for Miss Wallraven's increasing and extreme distress. She looked like a second Cassandra, and would start and shudder, pale and glare, as though in momentary expectation of some appalling sight. Her anxiety became so intense that apparently she could endure it no longer, but touched the bell, and, at the entrance of a servant, ordered chamber lights, and, turning to Regina, said,

"Mrs. Wallraven! the clock is on the stroke of twelve, and you have had a fatiguing day. I am ready to show you your chamber."

Regina arose, and, slightly bowing her "Good-night," left the room, followed by Constantia. I soon after arose and retired to my own, which was on the same floor with that of Regina.

I know not what presentiment suddenly overcrept my mind, but, oppressed with a vague and terrible anxiety, I sought to sleep in vain.

Finally I returned to the drawing-room. Constant was gone. It was now empty. The room was so large that the light upon the center-table barely served to make darkness visible, except in its immediate vicinity. I put up the light of the lamp, and walked up and down the floor, restlessly expecting, but without connecting that feeling with my unaccountable gloom, the return of Mr. Wallraven and Wolfgang. I know not how long I might have been waiting there, when the door swung noiselessly open, and Regina re-entered the room, her hair in disorder, and a dressing-gown hastily thrown on. I turned wonderingly to meet her. I saw then that her fair face was blue-pale, and that she trembled with a nervousness I had never seen her betray before.

"My dear sister! What is the matter?" asked I, leading her to an easy-chair, into which she immediately sank.

"I do not know! Perhaps a dream! Perhaps something real. Listen! I went to my chamber attended by Miss Wallraven only, and her dressing-maid. Miss Wallraven assisted me to disrobe; but

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every few minutes, with a corrugated brow and straining eye, she paused to listen or to watch. Finally she concluded her task, and when I was in bed she drew the curtains, and was about to leave me. Suddenly she turned back and advised me to bolt the door behind her, and then left the room. I did not get up to bolt the door, because I should have had to get up a second time to open it, but I fell asleep, wondering what negro might be on the point of death, or what other trouble had called the Messrs. Wallraven so abruptly from the house. Well! I had no sooner fallen into a deep sleep, than I awakened as by the shock of a galvanic battery, just in time to see the most diabolical-looking old hag that ever nightmare created stooping over me, gazing into my opened eyes with a grin of malignity that seemed to freeze all the blood in my veins. I started violently forward, and she vanished. I was instantly bathed in a cold sweat. I thought this might be a dream, and resolutely composed myself to sleep again—only to be started out of my sleep again by another and a more violent electric shock, and to see again the same eyes of demoniac hatred gazing into mine, to make another instinctive bound, and see the terrible night-haunter vanish as before! It was impossible now to sleep, or think of sleep. I hastily threw on my dressing-gown, slipped my feet into slippers, and came down here to await the gentlemen. I have heard of nightmare, but this is the first time I ever was attacked with it, and it was very natural that my excited imagination should then create the illusion of the old hag, after your telling me of what you saw or fancied you saw in that chamber the first night you slept there—There! I feel truly humiliated at these tremors, which I cannot control—Ferdinand! there she is now!"

This last sentence was spoken in a tone of discovery and announcement, as one might use upon finding out an imaginary phantom to be an ugly old woman. I turned and saw, standing within the door in the full light of the candle she held above her head, the hag of

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my night-vision. She was the most loathsome specimen of humanity I had ever seen, as she stood there some seconds, examining us with the same leer of insult and malignity. There she stood, chuckling with a fiendish grin at the very loathing she excited—repaying the extreme of disgust with the extreme of hatred.

"What do you want?" I asked.

'Hik-hik-hik-hik!" she answered, with her low, wicked laugh, passing me, and going toward Regina.

"Leave the room!" said I, intercepting her.

She did not heed me, but went on.

"Will you leave the room?" again I asked.

"Yes, when I have kissed my pretty niece," she replied, nodding her head at me with a demon grin.

I stepped quickly up to Regina, with the intention of leading her from the room, and from the revolting presence of what I now supposed to be some gibbering and malign lunatic.

I drew Regina's arm within my own, and we were coming down the length of the room, my sister, with an expression of disgust amounting to pain, contracting her beautiful features. We passed to one side, in order to avoid meeting the hag; but she knew our purpose, crossed the room, and intercepted us.

"Out of our way! Off with yourself instantly!" exclaimed I, angrily.

"Yes! when I have kissed my pretty niece!"

"Begone!" said I, turning off to the other side.

"Yes! I will, when I kiss my pretty niece!" she persisted.

I did not wish to hurt, and I could not have brought myself to touch the filthy creature. I took up a parasol that lay upon the table, and, placing one end of it against her chest, bore her gently off. She left, and, retreating, planted herself within the doorway. I came on with my weapon, half laughing at the Quixotic figure I cut, charging upon a mad, old negro woman with a parasol, and placed the end of it, as before, against her chest, saying,

"Come! Be good! let us pass!"

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But suddenly she raised her talon hand, clutched my weapon, threw it behind her, and elevating the streaming tallow candle with the other, gazed upon Regina with a countenance full of curiosity, hatred, and expected triumph. My sister drew her arm from mine, and retreated.

"Hik-hik-hik! my pretty niece; you are very fair and very proud! but pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty temper before destruction."

"Off with yourself this moment!" said I, losing patience, "or I shall be tempted to contaminate myself, and put you out!"

"I dare you to touch me!" she said.

"I shall certainly do so if you do not move in one minute."

"Yes! in a minute, but let me kiss my fair, pretty niece first!"

"You are mad! That lady is Mrs. Wallraven!"

"I know it! My nephew Wolfgang's wife!"

I still thought her crazy; nevertheless an icy pang shot through my heart.

"Who are you?" said I.

"Nell! Old Nell! Yellow Nell! Slave Nell! Hugh Wallraven's sister-in-law! Wolfgang Wallraven's aunt—his mother's sister! Regina Wallraven's near relative! Yes! fair lady! proud as fair! you are my niece."

I turned to look on Regina! to behold a body petrified, as it were, to stone!—from whence the light of reason had fled instantly and forever!

"Come! let me embrace my niece!" and, laughing hideously, she advanced toward my sister.

Regina turned, stepped upon a footstool, thence upon a chair, finally upon the center-table, and seated herself upon a pile of books with an air of mad majesty and dominion.

"Order out the guards! To prison with the traitors! To the rack! to the rack with the beldame! Ourself will preside at the question!"

I hurled away the hag, and went to my sister.

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"Regina!"

"My Lord Chancellor, let the Prince of Darkness be immediately arrested upon our own charge of high treason!"

"Regina! my dear sister!"

"Let there be no delay! Summon the council! Our life and crown are no longer safe! Traitors lurk in our very bed-chamber, assassins hide in the very shadow of our throne! Already one of the ladies of our bed-chamber—our beloved Regina Fairfield—lies dead before us! The shaft that pierced her heart was aimed at our own sacred life!"

"My God! My God!"

"To the rack! to the rack with the beldame! Strain every limb and nerve and sinew to cracking, until she confess herself the tool of the Prince of Darkness!"

"Oh! heaven!"

"To the rack! to the rack with the hag! We will ourself preside at the question!"

"Regina!"

"Order out the guards! Summon the council! To prison! to prison with the traitor!" she exclaimed, rising in a sort of mad majesty, her form elevated and dilating, her eye blazing with the fire of insanity, her unbound golden locks rolling in fallen glory to her waist, her left hand folding her rich dressing-gown about her as though it were the ermine purple, her right hand extended in a gesture of high command—a moment—and then lowered with the finger pointed to the door, as she said, "Lo! where the traitor Prince obtrudes himself into our very presence!"

I turned to see at a glance Wolfgang Wallraven enter the room, and the hag shake her clenched fist at him, saying,

"Now is my hatred glutted! Now is my revenge complete. Look to your fair wife!"

Wolfgang's lightning glance caught the whole state of affairs instantly. Rage, grief, and despair, stormed in his face. With the bound of an unchained demon he sprang upon the hag, and, with his hands round her

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throat, bore her down to the floor, placed his knee upon her chest, and nearly strangled her before I could prevent him. Rising, he spurned the beldame with his foot, and turned toward us. His typhoon of anger had subsided; despair, sorrow, tenderness, were all to be seen now, as he approached Regina.

"Off, traitor!" she shouted, seizing from the table an antique dagger, that lay there as an article of rare *vertu*.

He drew near her.

"Off, I say!" she exclaimed, unsheathing and brandishing the dagger. "You come to death!"

"I know it," said Wolfgang.

"Off, traitor! you desecrate our very throne! Nay, then, it shall become your scaffold!" exclaimed she, furiously, shaking the dagger.

"Let me die so," he said, and stepped upon the footstool thence upon the table, and threw his arms around her.

With a savage cry she raised the weapon; the blade gleamed in the lamp-light an instant, and the next was buried deep in the breast of the wretched man, who, without a groan, fell backward, and rolled upon the floor. In the extreme frenzy of mania, Regina bounded from the table, brandishing the crimsoned dagger.

I threw myself suddenly upon her, cast my arms about her, but her struggles were so violent, and her maniac strength so great, that she must have escaped me, had not her screams brought the whole household from their beds and into the room.

The scene of amazement, horror, anguish, and despair, that ensued now, defies all description. In the stormy chaos, I saw old Mr. Wallraven sitting on the floor, with the form of the fast-dying Wolfgang drawn into his arms and pillowed upon his chest. I saw Constantia, half dressed, with her black hair streaming, kneeling by his side, wringing her hands.

I saw all this, while, with the assistance of Constant Wallraven, I was disarming and securing the maniac.

"Father! she was mad, father! Do not let her be

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molested; do not desert her. Protect her, father," faintly murmured the dying man.

"Unhappy boy! tell me one thing. You did not deceive her! You told her your position!"

"Father, no! I had not the courage! I thought to have got her to France, where—oh, God! I die!—where she would never have known——"

"Oh, wretched Wolfgang! I cannot reproach you now! This deception has cost you your life!"

"And her, her reason, father! I die by her hand! It is just! it is just! it is just! Oh! bring me near her! Let me see her again! Lay me at her feet! Let me die there!"

"Oh! Wolfgang! that you so terribly deceived that unhappy young lady!"

"I loved her so—I loved her so—that, for the brief possession of her love, I endure death. Father! she must not die! She must recover. Nay, she will, when she knows her evil genius, her mortal foe, who loved her unto death, is dead! Take me to her! Lay me at her feet! Let me die there, looking upon her!

Regina was now lying on the sofa, exhausted by her frantic struggles. Old Mr. Wallraven beckoned Constant, and between them Wolfgang was lifted, brought near the sofa, and laid upon the carpet, with his head supported as before upon his father's arms. He looked up at her, but she did not open her eyes to look upon him. He feebly raised his hand and took hers. At the touch she opened her eyes, and as soon as they fell upon him, with a frenzied cry of anguish and despair, she bounded to her feet, foaming at the mouth, and went into the most violent paroxysm of madness. Constant Wallraven and myself seized and tried to hold her; and while she was struggling, plunging, and screaming in our arms, Wolfgang raised himself upon his elbow, gave one long agonized look upon the wreck, fell back and died!

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CHAPTER XI.

THE FATE.

Thus lived—thus died they—never more on them
Shall sorrow light, or shame.—BYRON.

THE next day a coroner's inquest sat in the saloon, and the crowd, collected by the rumor of what had taken place, filled the house. I was the principal witness, and as soon as I had given in my testimony, and was permitted to retire, I wandered toward the chamber whence the terrible screams of the maniac bride still issued, filling all the air.

Constant, Constantia, and myself, were constant and unremitting in our attentions to my wretched sister. For two days and nights she raved in high delirium, and then sunk, under the united effects of nervous exhaustion and opiates, into a profound stupor.

Upon this second day the remains of the unfortunate Wolfgang Wallraven were committed to the grave. His funeral was perfectly quiet, attended by his own family and the Davenports.

During all this time, I could realize to myself nothing that had taken or was taking place. I seemed out of myself, in some unreal existence, and, sometimes wildly, desperately, hoped to wake and find it all a hideous dream.

That evening, when we returned from the funeral, I followed Mr. Wallraven to the library.

"Give me," said I, "some explanation of that which has wrecked all our happiness!"

"Be seated!" said the old man, himself sinking exhausted into a chair. I sat down and waited for him to speak. He leaned his forehead down upon his open palm, and, after a silence of a few minutes, sighed heavily, and said:

"I am unequal, now, to the task of giving you any lengthy detail. Listen then! I married my mother's

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maid. She was a quadroon girl, brought up at my mother's knee; a simple, gentle child, whose life of chamber seclusion had kept her unspotted from the world; a loving, religious child, whose faith in her Heavenly Father was like a babe's innocent trust in its mother. She had been taught in her childhood almost to worship her 'young master'—the mother's spoiled and willful boy—the idol of the household. She learned in girlhood to love him with all the blind and passionate devotion of her race. I had the power of life and death over her—yes, of eternal life and death—for her life hung upon my love—her integrity upon my honor. The alternative for her was ruined fame, a broken heart, and the grave; or the marriage ring and benediction. The alternative for me was sin without infamy, or infamy without sin—or so it seemed to me in my passionate youth. I chose the latter. I loved her, I married her, and lost caste, I and my children, forever! The whole community recoiled in loathing from us. The minister who united us was ungowned and degraded from his pulpit. Our marriage was declared illegal, and my mother, to oblige me to break the connection, made a will, just before her death, by which she left me Constance and her children, upon condition only of my never freeing them. Upon my attempting to break this condition, they were to become the property of a distant relative. Constance brought me three children—Wolfgang, unhappy boy! and then Constant and Constantia. But they could not be my heirs, because they could not legally hold property. At my death they themselves would inevitably become the property of others. And the more legal light I brought to bear upon my mother's will, the more decided was this fact. My other property—the land, negroes, bank stock, hall, and mills—I inherited from my father, without restriction. I was unutterably wretched. Constance, seeing the misery of which she had been the innocent cause, fell into a deep melancholy, from which neither the affection of her children nor my own love and unremitting endeavors

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could arouse her. Her health failed, and she died when Constant and Constantia were but twelve months old. Again I consulted the ablest lawyers in the State, only to be more than ever convinced that there was no possibility of setting aside my mother's will. There was not in all Virginia a father so unhappy as myself. A thousand times I prayed for the death of my children. If one of them fell ill, I watched the progress of his or her illness with extreme anxiety, not fearing they might die, but fearing they might live! Conscience, and not a wish that they should survive, induced me to provide necessary nursing and medical attendance at such time. At last it suddenly occurred to me that I might easily evade the will. It is strange that this expedient never struck me until years of misery had passed; but so it was in my case, and so I have often seen it in the case of others. The remedies for what we conceive to be incurable ills often lie very near us unseen or neglected. It suddenly struck me that nothing hindered my sending my children, while they were mine, to a foreign country, and transferring my whole property thither. I resolved to do so. My sons were then at college, and my daughter at boarding-school in the North. I was in robust health, and of a race never subject to illness or sudden death; therefore I felt that there was no occasion for hurry, and I was not in haste to sell, and leave forever my native soil, while my children were receiving their education. I determined, however, to do it upon the first indication of declining health. Well, month slipped after month, and grew into years. Constant returned from Princeton, where he was educated, and commenced the study of divinity as a private pupil of Mr. Davenport. He formed an unhappy attachment, but Constant possessed a strong mind and righteous heart. He struggled with, and conquered his passion, coming out as pure gold from the furnace of his trial. After this experience, I determined to guard my unhappy children from forming indiscreet attachments.

"When Wolfgang returned from Harvard, accom-

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panied by yourself, I saw your sudden admiration of my daughter. I withdrew her from your presence. I warned Wolfgang against the society of young ladies. I knew nothing of your sister, or I never should have consented to his visiting you at your own home. The first knowledge I had of Miss Fairfield was from the letter of Wolfgang that announced his engagement. Without literally telling me so, it was couched in such terms as, with other circumstances, to mislead me into the belief that she knew all! This was not unnatural. I thought to some his infinitessimal proportion of African blood might be no objection—while his many distinguished—pardon me! It was a father's dotage. Wolfgang told me in his letter that his bride had consented to depart with him to France immediately after the marriage ceremony. This afforded me the opportunity I wanted to secure a fortune to my son, by settling it upon Miss Fairfield—to which there could be no legal obstruction. A few weeks before the marriage I received a long letter from Wolfgang, telling me that his Regina, willful as charming, insisted on coming to Hickory Hall, and being introduced to her father-in-law before her departure for France. In this turn of affairs, he requested me to send Constant and Constantia to him, and, above all things, to imprison old Nell, whose very sight would appall Regina, and whose extreme boldness and malignity would assuredly instigate her to present herself before the bride."

"But what, then, is the ground of such malignity, and how could one so degraded be in any manner related to one so beautiful, so angelic, as was Constance, judging by your description of her, as well as by a portrait I saw and missed the same night from the walls of my chamber, and which I now suspect to have been hers."

"Yes—it was hers—old Nell stole it that night, She had long wanted the small personal effects of Constance, and had watched her opportunity of getting into the closed chamber. You left your door unlocked, and she entered the room, rifled the bureau, and carried off the

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portrait, and had returned, it is likely, to rob you, when a slight sound of her steps attracted Wolfgang, who happened not to have retired, but was in the next room. He followed her into your chamber the last time, and arrested her at your bedside. You asked me the cause of Nell's malignity, and expressed astonishment at the idea of her relationship to Constance. She is, really, no blood-relation to Constance or my children.

"She was the step-daughter of Constance's father, and hence the claim to relationship, hence her presumption to a high degree of notice and favor, even while her extreme deformity and her disgusting habits and vices, made her very presence in the meanest capacity insufferable; and hence her envy, hatred, and demoniac malignity. She openly said and swore among her fellows that she would 'kiss her pretty niece.' Upon the night, therefore, that the bridal party was expected, we locked her up in her remote cabin, charging old John with her custody. She escaped, and concealed herself, evidently with the object of seeking and insulting the bride. This gave me only uneasiness, for I supposed Regina at least knew our position; but it filled Wolfgang, who knew, and his brther and sister, who had lately discovered, the illusion under which your unhappy sister had given her hand in marriage, with consternation. While we were seeking the hag elsewhere, she had effected her entrance to the house, and found her way to Mrs. Wallraven's presence! You were there! You know better than myself what followed. It is necessary to repeat, however, that there, for the first time, I discovered the concealment that had been used toward the ill-fated lady. I have nothing more to tell. If I have sinned against the conventional usages of the society in which I was born and lived, my whole life has been one long and terrible expiation."

I took his hand and pressed it, and silently withdrew from the room.

In the course of a week, I discovered that there was no one who possessed the least moral control over the maniac girl except Constantia. Mr. Wallraven prayed

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that she should remain at Hickory Hall, when I talked of removing her. In truth, the change from their affectionate though sorrowful care, to that of a lunatic asylum, would have been a most unfortunate one for the victim. She had the best medical advice that the country could produce, or wealth could purchase. For more than a year, her malady has constantly increased until it has left her the ruin you see.

I, also, Mary, was nearly blighted when you met, pitied, loved me.

The reading of the manuscript had occupied the whole night. It was sunrise when I folded it up, and began to make my simple morning toilet. Before this was completed a low tap was heard at the door, and, to my "come in," Mary entered, apparently just returned from her nightly visit.

She sat down by the fire.

"You have been to see Regina Fairfield, at Hickory Hall." said I.

"Yes," she replied.

"And she——"

"Died at one this morning—died in her senses—reason had returned at the approach of dissolution. She died forgiving all who had had a hand in her betrayal and wreck, and praying forgiveness for herself. She died upon Constantia's bosom."

We attended the funeral of Regina Fairfield, which was conducted with great simplicity. We left Cedar Cliffs soon after. Upon our return from Virginia we lost sight of the Wallravens of Hickory Hall for many years. We heard frequently by letter from Mary Fairfield, and knew that the health and spirits of Ferdinand were gradually improving. In one of her letters to me, Mary mentioned that old Mr. Wallraven had sold the property of Hickory Hall, and left the State, accompanied by his two children. This was the first and last time that Mary ever mentioned them in any of her letters.

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DARK DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

A PRAYER AND A VOW.

WHEN this story of my life, or of such portions of my life as present any out-of-the-common features, is read, it will be found that I have committed errors of judgment—that I have sinned not only socially, but also against the law of the land. In excuse I can plead but two things—the strength of love; the weakness of human nature.

If these carry no weight with you, throw the book aside. You are too good for me; I am too human for you. We cannot be friends. Read no further.

I need say nothing about my childhood; nothing about my boyhood. Let me hurry on to early manhood; to that time when the wonderful dreams of youth begin to leave one; when the impulse which can drive sober reason aside must be, indeed, a strong one; when one has learned to count the cost of every rash step; when the transient and fitful flames of the boy have settled down to a steady, glowing fire which will burn until only ashes are left; when the strength, the nerve, the intel-

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lect, is or should be at its height; when, in short, one's years number thirty.

Yet what was I then? A soured, morose, disappointed man; without ambition, without care for the morrow; without a goal or object in life. Breathing, eating, drinking, as by instinct. Rising in the morning, and wishing the day were over; lying down at night, and caring little whether the listless eyes I closed might open again or not.

And why? Ah! to know why you must sit with me as I sit lonely over my glowing fire one winter night. You must read my thoughts; the pictures of my past must rise before you as they rise before me. My sorrow, my hate, my love must be yours. You must, indeed, be my very self.

You may begin this retrospect with triumph. You may go back to the day when, after having passed my examination with high honors, I, Basil North, was duly entitled to write M.D. after my name, and to set to work to win fame and fortune by doing my best toward relieving the sufferings of my fellow-creatures. You may say as I said then, as I say now, "A noble career; a life full of interest and usefulness."

You may see me full of hope and courage, and ready for any amount of hard work; settling down in a large provincial town, resolved to beat out a practice for myself. You may see how, after the usual initiatory struggles, my footing gradually grew firmer; how my name became familiar; how, at last, I seemed to be in a fair way of winning success.

You may see how for a while a dream brightened my life; how that dream faded, and left gloom in its place. You may see the woman I loved.

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No, I am wrong. Her you cannot see. Only I myself can see Philippa as I saw her then—as I see her now.

Heavens! how fair she was! How glorious her rich dark beauty! How different from the pink-white and yellow dolls whom I have seen exalted as the types of perfection! Warm Southern blood ran through her veins and tinged her clear brown cheek with color. Her mother was an Englishwoman; but it was Spain that gave her daughter that exquisite grace, those wondrous dark eyes and long curled lashes, that mass of soft black hair, that passionate impulsive nature, and, perhaps, that queen-like carriage and dignity. The English mother may have given the girl many good gifts, but her beauty came from the father, whom she had never known; the Andalusian, who died while she was but a child in arms.

Yet, in spite of her foreign grace, Philippa was English. Her Spanish origin was to her but a tradition. Her foot had never touched her father's native land. Its language was strange to her. She was born in England, and her father, the nature of whose occupation I have not been able to ascertain, seems to have spent most of his time in this country.

When did I learn to love her? Ask me rather, When did we first meet? Even then, as my eyes fell upon the girl, I knew, as by revelation, that for me life and her love meant one and the same thing. Till that moment there was no woman in the world the sight of whom would have quickened my pulse by a beat. I had read and heard of such love as this. I had laughed at it. There seemed no room for such an engrossing passion in my busy life. Yet all at once I loved as man has never loved before; and as I sit to-night and gaze into the fire I tell myself that the objectless life I am leading is the

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only one possible for the man who loved but failed to win Philippa.

Our first meeting was brought about in a most prosaic way. Her mother, who suffered from a chronic disease, consulted me professionally. My visits, at first those of a doctor, soon became those of a friend, and I was free to woo the girl to the best of my ability.

Philippa and her mother lived in a small house on the outskirts of the town. They were not rich people, but had enough to keep the pinch of poverty from their lives. The mother was a sweet, quiet, lady-like woman, who bore her sufferings with resignation. Her health was, indeed, wretched. The only thing which seemed likely to benefit her was continual change of air and scene. After attending her for about six months, I was in conscience bound to indorse the opinion of her former medical advisers, and tell her it would be well for her to try another change.

My heart was heavy as I gave this advice. If adopted, it meant that Philippa and I must part.

But why, during those six months, had I not, passionately in love as I was, won the girl's heart? Why did she not leave me as my affianced bride? Why did I let her leave me at all?

The answer is short. She loved me not.

Not that she had ever told me so in words. I had never asked her in words for her love. But she must have known—she must have known! When I was with her, every look, every action of mine must have told her the truth. Women are not fools or blind. A man who, loving as I did, can conceal the true state of his feelings must be more than mortal.

I had not spoken; I dared not speak. Better uncer-

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tainty with hope, than certainty with despair. The day on which Philippa refused my love would be as the day of death to me.

Besides, what had I to offer her? Although succeeding fairly well for a beginner, at present I could only ask the woman I made my wife to share comparative poverty. And Philippa! Ah! I would have wrapped Philippa in luxury! All that wealth could buy ought to be hers. Had you seen her in the glory of her fresh young beauty, you would have smiled at the presumption of the man who could expect such a being to become the wife of a hard-working and as yet ill-paid doctor. You would have felt that she should have had the world at her feet.

Had I thought that she loved me, I might perhaps have dared to hope she would even then have been happy as my wife. But she did not love me. Moreover, she was ambitious.

She knew—small blame to her—how beautiful she was. Do I wrong her when I say that in those days she looked for the gifts of rank and riches from the man who loved her? She knew that she was a queen among women, and expected a queen's dues.

(Sweetest, are my words cruel? They are the cruelest I have spoken, or shall speak, against you. Forgive them!)

We were friends—great friends. Such friendship is love's bane. It buoys false hopes; it lulls to security; it leads astray; it is a staff which breaks suddenly, and wounds the hand which leans upon it. So little it seems to need to make friendship grow into love; and yet how seldom that little is added! The love which begins with hate or dislike is often luckier than that which begins with friendship. Lovers cannot be friends.

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Philippa and her mother left my neighborhood, then went to London for a while. I heard from them occasionally, and once or twice, when in town, called upon them. Time went by. I worked hard at my profession the while, striving, by sheer toil, to drive away the dream from my life. Alas! I strove in vain. To love Philippa was to love her forever!

One morning a letter came from her. I tore it open. The news it contained was grievous. Her mother had died suddenly. Philippa was alone in the world. So far as I knew, she had not a relation left; and I believed, perhaps hoped, that, save myself, she had no friend.

I needed no time for consideration. That afternoon I was in London. If I could not comfort her in her great sorrow, I could at least sympathize with her, could undertake the management of the many business details which are attendant upon a death.

Poor Philippa! She was glad to see me. Through her tears she flashed me a look of gratitude. I did all I could for her, and stayed in town until the funeral was over. Then I was obliged to think of going home. What was to become of the girl?

Kith or kin she had none, nor did she mention the name of any friend who would be willing to receive her. As I suspected, she was absolutely alone in the world. As soon as my back was turned she would have no one on whom she could count for sympathy or help.

It must have been her utter loneliness which urged me, in spite of my better judgment, in spite of the grief which still oppressed her, to throw myself at her feet and declare the desire of my heart. My words I cannot recall, but I think—I know I pleaded eloquently. Such passion as mine gives power and intensity to the most

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unpractised speaker. Yet long before my appeal was ended I knew that I pleaded in vain. Her eyes, her manner, told me she loved me not.

Then, remembering her present helpless condition, I checked myself. I begged her to forget the words I had spoken; not to answer them now; to let me say them again in some months' time. Let me still be her friend, and render her such service as I could.

She shook her head; she held out her hand. The first action meant the refusal of my love; the second, the acceptance of my friendship. I schooled myself to calmness, and we discussed her plans for the future.

She was lodging in a house in a quiet, respectable street near Regent's Park. She expressed her intention of staying on here for a while.

"But alone!" I exclaimed.

"Why not? What have I to fear? Still, I am open to reason, if you can suggest another plan."

I could suggest no other. Philippa was past twenty-one and would at once succeed to whatever money had been her mother's. This was enough to live upon. She had no friends, and must live somewhere. Why should she not stay on at her present lodgings? Nevertheless, I trembled as I thought of this beautiful girl all alone in London. Why could she not love me? Why could she not be my wife? It needed all my self-restraint to keep me from breaking afresh into passionate appeals.

As she would not give me the right to dispose of her future, I could no nothing more. I bade her a sad farewell, then went back to my home to conquer my unhappy love, or to suffer from its fresh inroads.

Conquer it! Such love as mine is never conquered. It is a man's life. Philippa was never absent from my

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thoughts. Let my frame of mind be gay or grave, Philippa was always present.

Now and then she wrote to me, but her letters told me little as to her mode of life; they were short friendly epistles, and gave me little hope.

Yet I was not quite hopeless. I felt that I had been too hasty in asking her for her love so soon after her mother's death. Let her recover from the shock, then I will try again. Three months was the time which in my own mind I resolved should elapse before I again approached her with words of love. Three months! How wearily they dragged themselves away!

Toward the end of my self-imposed term of probation I fancied that a brighter, gayer tone manifested itself in Philippa's letters. Fool that I was! I augured well from this.

Telling myself that such love as mine must win in the end, I went to London, and once more saw Philippa. She received me kindly. Although her garb was still that of deep mourning, never, I thought, had she looked more beautiful. Not long after our first greeting did I wait before I began to plead again. She stopped me at the outset.

"Hush," she said; "I have forgotten your former words; let us still be friends."

"Never!" I cried passionately. "Philippa, answer me once for all, tell me you can love me!"

She looked at me compassionately. "How can I best answer you?" she said, musingly. "The sharpest remedy is perhaps the kindest. Basil, will you understand me when I say it is too late?"

"Too late! What can you mean? Has another—"

The words died on my lips as Philippa, drawing a

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ring from the fourth finger of her left hand, showed me that it concealed a plain gold circlet. Her eyes met mine imploringly.

"I should have told you before," she said softly, and bending her proud head; "but there were reasons—even now I am pledged to tell no one. Basil, I only show you this, because I know you will take no other answer."

I rose without a word. The room seemed whirling around me. The only thing which was clear to my sight was that cursed gold band on the fair white hand—that symbol of possession by another! In that moment hope and all the sweetness of life seemed swept away from me.

Something in my face must have told her how her news affected me. She came to me and laid her hand upon my arm. I trembled like a leaf beneath her touch. She looked beseechingly into my face.

"Oh, not like that!" she cried. "Basil, I am not worth it. I should not have made you happy. You will forget—you will find another. If I have wronged or misled you, say you forgive me. Let me hear you, my true friend, wish me happiness."

I strove to force my dry lips to frame some conventional phrase. In vain! words would not come. I sank into a chair and covered my face with my hands.

The door opened suddenly, and a man entered. He may have been about forty years of age. He was tall and remarkably handsome. He was dressed with scrupulous care; but there was something written on his face which told me it was not the face of a good man. As I rose from my chair he glanced from me to Philippa with an air of suspicious inquiry.

"Doctor North, an old friend of my mother's and

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mine," she said with composure. "Mr. Farmer," she added; and a rosy blush crept round her neck as she indicated the new-comer by the name which I felt sure was now also her own.

I bowed mechanically. I made a few disjointed remarks about the weather and kindred topics; then I shook hands with Philippa and left the house, the most miserable man in England.

Philippa married, and married secretly! How could her pride have stooped to a clandestine union? What manner of man was he who had won her? Heavens! he must be hard to please if he cared not to show his conquest to the light of day. Cur! sneak! coward! villain! Stay; he may have his own reasons for concealment—reasons known to Philippa and approved of by her. Not a word against her. She is still my queen; the one woman in the world to me. What she has done is right!

I passed a sleepless night. In the morning I wrote to Philippa. I wished her all happiness—I could command my pen, if not my tongue. I said no word about the secrecy of the wedding, or the evils so often consequent to such concealment. But, with a foreboding of evil to come, I begged her to remember that we were friends; that, although I could see her no more, whenever she wanted a friend's aid, a word would bring me to her side. I used no word of blame. I risked no expression of love or regret. No thought of my grief should jar upon the happiness which she doubtless expected to find. Farewell the one dream of my life! Farewell Philippa!

Such a passion as mine may, in these matter-of-fact, unromantic days, seem an anachronism. No matter,

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whether to sympathy or ridicule, I am but laying bare my true thoughts and feelings.

I would not return to my home at once. I shrank from going back to my lonely hearth and beginning to eat my heart out. I had made arrangements to stay in town for some days; so I stayed, trying by a course of what is termed gayety to drive remembrance away. Futile effort! How many have tried the same reputed remedy without success!

Four days after my interview with Philippa, I was walking with a friend who knew every one in town. As we passed the door of one of the most exclusive of the clubs, I saw, standing on the steps talking to other men, the man whom I knew was Philippa's husband. His face was turned from me, so I was able to direct my friend's attention to him.

"Who is that man?" I asked.

"That man with the gardenia in his coat is Sir Mervyn Ferrand."

"Who is he? What is he? What kind of a man is he?"

"A baronet. Not very rich. Just about the usual kind of man you see on those steps. Very popular with the ladies, they tell me."

"Is he married?"

"Heaven knows! I don't. I never heard of a Lady Ferrand, although there must be several who are morally entitled to use the designation."

And this was her husband—Philippa's husband!

I clinched my teeth. Why had he married under a false name? Or if she knew that name by which she introduced him to me was false, why was it assumed? Why had the marriage been clandestine? Not only Sir

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Mervyn Ferrand, but the noblest in the land should be proud of winning Philippa! The more I thought of the matter, the more wretched I grew. The dread that she had been in some way deceived almost drove me mad. The thought of my proud, beautiful queen some day finding herself humbled to the dust by a scoundrel's deceit was anguish. What could I do?

My first impulse was to demand an explanation, then and there, from Sir Mervyn Ferrand. Yet I had no right or authority so to do. What was I to Philippa save an unsuccessful suitor? Moreover, I felt that she had revealed her secret to me in confidence. If there were good reasons for the concealment, I might do her irretrievable harm by letting this man know that I was aware of his true position in society. No, I could not call him to account. But I must do something, or in time to come my grief may be rendered doubly deep by self-reproach.

The next day I called upon Philippa. She would at least tell me if the name under which the man married her was the true or the false one. Alas! I found she had left her home the day before—left it to return no more! The landlady had no idea whither she was gone, but believed it was her intention to leave England.

After this I threw prudence to the winds. With some trouble I found Sir Mervyn Ferrand's town address. The next day I called on him. He also, I was informed, had just left England. His destination was also unknown.

I turned away moodily. All chance of doing good was at an end. Let the marriage be true or false, Philippa had departed, accompanied by the man who, for purposes of his own, passed under the name of Farmer, but who was really Sir Mervyn Ferrand.

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I went back to my home, and amid the wreck of my life's happiness murmured a prayer and registered an oath. I prayed that honor and happiness might be the lot of her I loved; I swore that were she wronged I would with my own hand take vengeance on the man who wronged her.

For myself I prayed nothing—not even forgetfulness, I loved Philippa: I had lost her forever! The past, the present, the future were all summed up in these words!

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CHAPTER II.

A VILLAIN'S BLOW.

THEY tell me there are natures stern enough to be able to crush love out of their lives. Ah! not such love as mine! Time, they say, can heal every wound. Not such a wound as mine! My whole existence underwent a change when Philippa showed me the wedding-ring on her finger. No wonder it did. Hope was eliminated from it. From that moment I was a changed man.

Life was no longer worth living. The spur of ambition was blunted; the desire for fame gone; the interest which I had hitherto felt in my profession vanished. All the spring, the elasticity, seemed taken out of my being. For months and months I did my work in a perfunctory manner. It gave me no satisfaction that my practice grew larger. I worked, but I cared nothing for my work. Success gave me no pleasure. An increase to the number of my patients was positively unwelcome to me. So long as I made money enough to supply my daily needs, what did it matter? Of what use was wealth to me? It could not buy me the one thing for which I craved. Of what use was life? No wonder that such friends as I had once possessed all but forsook me. My mood at that time was none of the sweetest. I wanted no friends. I was alone in the world; I should be always alone.

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So things went on for more than a year. I grew worse instead of better. My gloom deepened; my cynicism grew more confirmed; my life became more and more aimless.

These are not lovers' rhapsodies. I would spare you them if I could; but it is necessary that you should know the exact state of my mind in order to understand my subsequent conduct. Even now it seems to me that I am writing this description with my heart's blood.

Not a word came from Philippa. I made no inquiries about her, took no steps to trace her. I dared not. Not for one moment did I forget her, and through all those weary months tried to think of her as happy and to be envied; yet, in spite of myself, I shuddered as I pictured her lot as it might really be.

But all the while I knew that the day would come when I should learn whether I was to be thankful that my prayer had been answered, or to be prepared to keep my vow.

In my misanthropical state of mind I heard without the slightest feeling of joy or elation that a distant relative of mine, a man from whom I expected nothing, had died and left me the bulk of his large property. I cared nothing for this unexpected wealth, except for the fact that it enabled me to free myself from a round of toil in which by now I took not the slightest interest. Had it but come two or three years before! Alas! all things in this life come too late.

Now that I was no longer forced to mingle with men in order to gain the means of living, I absolutely shunned my kind. The wish of my youth, to travel in far countries, no longer existed with me. I disposed of my practice—or rather I simply handed it over to the first

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comer. I left the town of my adoption, and bought a small house—it was little more than a cottage—some five miles away from the tiny town of Roding. Here I was utterly unknown, and could live exactly as I chose; and for months it was my choice to live almost like a hermit.

My needs were ministered to by a man who had been for some years in my employment. He was a handy, faithful fellow; honest as the day, stolid as the Sphinx; and, for some reason or other, so much attached to me that he was willing to perform on my behalf the duties of housekeeping which are usually relegated to female servants.

Looking back upon that time of seclusion, as a medical man, I wonder what would eventually have been my fate if events had not occurred which once more forced me into the world of men? I firmly believe that brooding in solitude over my grief would at last have affected my brain; that sooner or later I must have developed symptoms of melancholia. Professionally speaking, the probabilities are I should have committed suicide.

Even in the depth of my degradation I must have known the dangers of the path which I was treading; for, after having passed six dreary months in my lonely cottage, I was trying to brace myself to seek a change of scene. I shrank from leaving my quiet abode; but every day formed afresh the resolve to do so.

Yet the days, each the same as its forerunner, went by, and I was still there. I had books, of course. I read for days together; then I would throw the volumes aside, and, with a bitter smile, ask myself to what end was I directing my studies. The accumulation of knowledge? Tush! I would give all the learning I had acquired, all that a lifetime of research could acquire, to hold Philippa

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for one brief moment to my heart, and hear her say she loved me! If in the whirl of men, in the midst of hard work, I found it impossible to conquer my hopeless passion, how could I expect to do so living as I at present lived?

There! my egotistical descriptions are almost over. Now you know why I said that you must sit by the fire and think with me; must enter, as it were, into my inner self before you can understand my mental state. Whether you sympathize with me or not depends entirely on your own organization. If you are so constructed that the love of one woman, and one only, can pervade your very being, fill your every thought, direct your every action, make life to you a blessing or a curse —if love comes to you in this guise, you will be able to understand me.

That night, when I first presented myself to you, my wounds seemed less likely than ever to heal; forgetfulness seemed farther and farther away. Somehow, as my thoughts took the well-worn road to the past, every event seemed recent as yesterday, every scene vivid as if I had just left it. Hour after hour I sat gazing at the glowing embers, but seeing only Philippa's beloved face. How had life fared with her? Where was she at this moment? The resolve to quit my seclusion was made anew by me. I would go into the world and find her—not for any selfish motive. I would learn from her own lips that she was happy. If unhappy, she should have from me such comfort as the love of a true friend can give. Yes, I would leave this wretched life to-morrow. My cheek flushed as I contrasted what I was with what I ought to be. No man has a right to ruin his life or hide his talents for the sake of a woman.

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I had another inducement which urged me to make a change in my mode of life. I am ashamed that I have not spoken of it. That morning I had received a letter from my mother. I had not seen her for six years. Just as I entered man's estate she married for the second time. My stepfather was an American, and with many tears my mother left me for her new home. Some months ago her husband died. I should have gone to her, but she forbade me. She had no children by her second husband; and now that his affairs were practically wound up she proposed returning to England. Her letter told me that she would be in London in three days' time, and suggested that I should meet her there.

Although of late years we had drifted apart, she was dear, very dear to me. I hated the thought of her seeing me, her only child, reduced to such a wreck of my former self; yet for her sake I again renewed my resolve of leaving my seclusion.

Yet I knew that to-morrow I should forswear myself, and sink back into my apathy and aimless existence. Ah! I knew not what events were to crowd into the morrow.

But now back to the night. It was mid-winter, and bitterly cold out of doors. My lamp was not yet lighted; the glow of my fire alone broke the darkness of the room. I had not even drawn the curtains or shut the shutters. At times I liked to look out and see the stars. They shone so peacefully, so calmly, so coldly; they seemed so unlike the world, with its strife and fierce passions and disappointments.

I rose languidly from my chair and walked to the window, to see what sort of a night it was. As I approached the casement I could see that the skies had

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darkened; moreover, I noticed that feathery flakes of snow were accumulating in the corner of each pane. I went close to the window and peered out into the night.

Standing within a yard of me, gazing into my dimly-lit room—her face stern and pale as death, her dark eyes now riveted on my own—was a woman; and that woman was Philippa, my love!

For several seconds I stood spellbound, gazing at her. That I saw more than a phantom of my imagination did not at once enter into my head. In dreams I had seen the one I loved again and again, but this was the first time my waking thoughts had conjured up such a vision. Vision, dream, reality! I trembled as I looked; for the form was that of Philippa in dire distress.

It was seeing the hood which covered her head grow whiter and whiter with the fast-falling snow which aroused me to my senses, and made every fibre thrill with the thought that Philippa, in flesh and blood, stood before me. With a low cry of rapture I tore asunder the fastening of the French casement, threw the sashes apart, and without a word my love passed from the cold, bleak night into my room.

She was wrapped from head to foot in a rich, dark fur-trimmed cloak. As she swept by me I felt she was damp with partially-thawed snow. I closed the window; then with a throbbing heart turned to greet my visitor. She stood in the centre of the room. Her mantle had fallen to the ground, and through the dusk I could see her white face, hands, and neck. I took her hands in mine; they were as cold as icicles.

"Philippa! Philippa! why are you here?" I whispered. "Welcome, thrice welcome, whether you bring me joy or sorrow."

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A trembling ran through her. She said nothing, but her cold hands clasped mine closer. I led her to the fire, which I stirred until it blazed brightly. She kneeled before it and stretched out her hands for warmth. How pale she looked; how unlike the Philippa of old! But to my eyes how lovely!

As I looked down at the fair woman kneeling at my feet, with her proud head bent as in shame, I knew intuitively that I should be called upon to keep my oath; and knowing this, I re-registered it in all its entirety.

At last she raised her face to mine. In her eyes was a sombre fire, which until now I had never seen there. "Philippa! Philippa!" I cried again.

"Fetch a light," she whispered. "Let me see a friend's face once more—if you are still my friend."

"Your friend, your true friend forever," I said, as I hastened to obey her.

As I placed the lamp on the table Philippa rose from her knees. I could now see that she was in deep mourning. Was the thought that flashed through me, that it might be that she was a widow, one of joy or sorrow? I hope—I try to believe it was the latter.

We stood for some moments in silence. My agitation, my rapture at seeing her once more seemed to have deprived me of speech. I could do little more than to gaze at her and tell myself that I was not dreaming; that Philippa was really here; that it was her voice that I had heard, her hands I clasped. Philippa it was, but not the Philippa of old!

The rich, warm, glowing beauty seemed toned down. Her face had lost its exquisite color. Moreover, it was the face of one who has suffered—one who is suffering. To me it looked as if illness had refined it, as it some-

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times will refine a face. Yet, if she had been ill, her illness could not have been of long duration. Her figure was as superb, her arms as finely rounded, as ever. She stood firm and erect. Yet I trembled as I gazed at that pale proud face and those dark solemn eyes. I dared not for the while ask her why she sought me.

She was the first to break silence. "You are changed, Basil," she said.

"Time changes every one," I answered, forcing a smile.

"Will you believe me," she continued, "when I say that the memory of your face as I saw it last has haunted even my most joyful moments? Ah me! Basil, had I been true to myself I think I might have learned to love you."

She spoke regretfully, and as one who has finished with life and its love. My heart beat rapidly; yet I knew her words were not spoken in order to hear me tell her that I loved her passionately as ever.

"I have heard of you once or twice," she said softly. "You are rich now, they tell me, but unhappy."

"I loved you and lost you," I answered. "How could I be happy?"

"And men can love like this?" she said sadly. "All men are not alike, then?"

"Enough of me," I said. "Tell me of yourself. Tell me how I can aid you. Your husband—"

She drew a sharp, quick breath. The color rushed back to her cheek. Her eyes glittered strangely. Nevertheless, she spoke calmly and distinctly.

"Husband! I have none," she said.

"Is he dead?"

"No"—she spoke with surprising bitterness—"No; I

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should rather say I never was a wife. Tell me, Basil," she continued fiercely, "did you ever hate a man?"

"Yes," I answered emphatically and truly. Hate a man! From the moment I saw the wretch with whom Philippa fled I hated him. Now that my worst suspicions were true, what were my feelings?

I felt that my lips compressed themselves. I knew that when I spoke my voice was as stern and bitter as Philippa's. "Sit down," I said, "and tell me all. Tell me how you knew I was here—where you have come from."

Let me but learn whence she came, and I felt sure the knowledge would enable me to lay my hand on the man I wanted. Ah! life now held something worth living for!

"I have been here some months," said Philippa.

"Here! In this neighborhood?"

"Yes. I have seen you several times. I have been living at a house about three miles away. I felt happier in knowing that in case of need I had one friend near me."

I pressed her hands. "Go on," I said hoarsely.

"He sent me here. He had grown weary of me. I was about to have a child. I was in his way—a trouble to him."

Her scornful accent as she spoke was indescribable.

"Philippa! Philippa!" I groaned, "had you sunk so low as to do his bidding?"

She laid her hand on my arm. "More," she said. "Listen! Before we parted he struck me. Struck—me! He cursed me and struck me! Basil, did you ever hate a man?"

I threw out my arms. My heart was full of rage and

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bitterness. "And you became this man's mistress rather than my wife!" I gasped. Neither my love nor her sorrow could stop this one reproach from passing my lips.

She sprang to her feet. "You!" she cried. "Do you —think—do you imagine— Read! Only this morning I learned it."

She threw a letter toward me—threw it with a gesture of loathing, as one throws a nauseous reptile from one's hand. I opened it mechanically.

"Yes," she said, "you were right in thinking I had fallen low. So low that I went where he chose to send me. So low that I would have forgiven the ill-treatment of months—the blow, even. Why? Because until this morning he was my husband. Read the letter. Basil, did you ever hate a man?"

Before I read I glanced at her in alarm. She spoke with almost feverish excitement. Her words followed one another with headlong rapidity. But who could wonder at this mood with a woman who had such a wrong to declare? She grew calm beneath my glance.

"Read," she said beseechingly. "Ah, God! I have fallen low; but not so low as you thought."

She buried her face in her hands while I opened and read the letter. It was dated from Paris, and ran so:

"As it seems to me that we can't exactly hit it off together, I think the farce had better end. The simplest way to make my meaning clear is to tell you that when I married you I had a wife alive. She has died since then; and I dare say, had we managed to get on better together, I should have asked you to go through the marriage ceremony once more. However, as things are now, so they had better stop. You have the satisfaction of knowing that morally you are blameless.

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"If, like a sensible girl, you are ready to accept the situation, I am prepared to act generously, and do the right thing in money matters. As I hate to have anything hanging over me unsettled, and do not care to trust delicate negotiations to a third party, I shall run across to England and see you. I shall reach Roding on Wednesday evening. Do not send to the station to meet me; I would rather walk."

The letter was unsigned. My blood boiled as I read it; yet, in spite of my rage, I felt a grim humor as I realized the exquisite cynicism possessed by the writer. Here was a man striking a foul and recreant blow at a woman whom he once loved—a blow that must crush her to the earth. His own words confess him a rogue, a bigamist; and yet he can speak coolly about money arrangements; can even enter into petty details concerning his approaching visit! He must be without shame, without remorse; a villain, absolutely heartless!

I folded the letter and placed it in my breast. I wished to keep it, that I might read it again and again during the next twenty-four hours. Long hours they would be. This letter would aid me to make them pass. Philippa made no objection to my keeping it. She sat motionless, gazing gloomily into the fire.

"You knew the man's right name and title?" I asked.

"Yes, from the first. Ah! there I wronged myself, Basil! The rank, the riches, perhaps tempted me; and —Basil, I loved him then."

Oh, the piteous regret breathed in that last sentence! I ground my teeth, and felt that there was a stronger passion than even love. "That man and I meet to-morrow," I told myself softly.

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"But you spoke of a child?" I said, turning to Philippa.

"It is dead—dead—dead!" she cried, with a wild laugh. "A fortnight ago it died. Dead! My grief then; my joy to-day! See! I am in mourning; to-morrow I shall put that mourning off. Why mourn for what is a happy event? No black after to-morrow."

Her mood had once more become excited. As before, her words came with feverish rapidity. I took her hands in mine; they were now burning.

"Philippa, dearest, be calm. You will see that man no more?"

"I will see him no more. It is to save myself from seeing him that I come to you. Little right have I to ask aid from you; but your words came back to me in my need. There was one friend to turn to. Help me, Basil! I come to you as a sister may come to a brother."

"As a sister to a brother," I echoed. "I accept the trust," I added, laying my lips reverentially on her white forehead, and vowing mentally to devote my life to her.

"You will stay here now?" I asked.

"No, I must go back. To-morrow I will come—to-morrow. Basil, my brother, you will take me far away—far away?"

"Where you wish. Every land is one as to me now."

She had given me the right, a brother's right, to stand between her and the villain who had wronged her. To-morrow that man would be here! How I longed for the moment which would bring us face to face!

Philippa rose. "I must go," she said.

I pressed food and wine upon her: she would take nothing. She made, however, no objection to my accompanying her to her home. We left the house by the

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casement by which she entered. Together we stepped out on the snow-whitened road. She took my arm, and we walked toward her home.

I asked her with whom she was staying. She told me with a widow lady and two children, named Wilson. She went to them at Sir Mervyn Ferrand's command. Mrs. Wilson, he told her, was a distant connection of his own, and he had made arrangements for her to look after Philippa during her illness.

It was but another proof of the man's revolting cynicism. To send the woman who falsely believed herself to be his wife to one of his own relations! Oh, I would have a full reckoning with him!

"What name do they know you by?" I asked.

"He said I was to call myself by the false name, which, for purposes of his own, he chose to pass under. But I felt myself absolved from my promise of secrecy. Why should I stay in a strange house with strange people by Sir Mervyn Ferrand's request, unless I could show good cause for doing so? So I told Mrs. Wilson everything."

"She believed you?"

"She was bound to believe me. I would have no doubt cast upon my word. I showed her the certificate of my marriage. Whatever she may have thought at first, she saw then that I was his wife. No one else knows it except her. To her I am Lady Ferrand. Like me, she never dreamed to what man's villainy can reach. O Basil! Basil! why are such men allowed to live?"

For the first time Philippa seemed to break down. Till now the chief characteristics of her mood had been scorn and anger. Now, sheer grief for the time appeared to sweep away every other emotion. Sob after sob broke

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from her. I endeavored to calm her—to comfort her. Alas! how little I could say or do to these ends! She leaned heavily and despondingly on my arm, and for a long while we walked in silence. At last she told me her home was close at hand.

"Listen, Philippa," I said; "I shall come in with you and see this lady with whom you are staying. I shall tell her I am your brother; that for some time I have known how shamefully your husband has neglected you; and that now, with your full consent, I mean to take you away. Whether this woman believes in our relationship or not, matters nothing. I suppose she knows that man is coming to-morrow. After his heartless desertion she cannot be surprised at your wish to avoid meeting him."

I paused. Philippa bent her head as if assenting to my plan.

"To-morrow," I continued, "long before that wretch comes here to poison the very air we breathe, I shall come and fetch you. Early in the morning I will send my servant for your luggage. Mrs. Wilson may know me and my man by sight. That makes no difference. There need be no concealment. You are free to come and go. You have no one to fear. On Thursday morning we will leave this place."

"Yes," said Philippa dreamily, "to-morrow I will leave—I will come to you. But I will come alone. In the evening most likely, when no one will know where I have gone."

"But how much better that I should take you away openly and in broad daylight, as a brother would take a sister!"

"No; I will come to you. You will not mind waiting, Basil. There is something I must do first. Some-

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thing to be done to-morrow. Something to be said; some one to be seen. What is it? who is it? I cannot recollect."

She placed her disengaged hand on her brow. She pushed back her head a little, and gave a sigh of relief as she felt the keen air on her temples. Poor girl! after what she had that day gone through, no wonder her mind refused to recall trivial details and petty arrangements to be made before she joined me. Sleep and the certainty of my sympathy and protection would no doubt restore her wandering memory.

However, although I again and again urged her to change her mind, she was firm in her resolve to come to me alone. At last, very reluctantly, I was obliged to give way on this point; but I was determined to see this Mrs. Wilson to-night; so when we reached the house I entered with Philippa.

I told her there was no occasion for her to be present at my interview with the hostess. She looked frightfully weary, and at my suggestion went straight to her room to retire for the night. I sat down and awaited the the advent of Mrs. Wilson. She soon appeared.

A woman of about five-and-thirty; well but plainly dressed. As I glanced at her with some curiosity, I decided that when young she must, after a certain type of beauty, have been extremely good-looking. Unfortunately hers was one of those faces cast in an aquiline mould—faces which, as soon as the bloom of youth is lost or the owners thereof turn to thinness, become, as a rule, sharp, strained, hungry, and severe-looking. Whatever the woman's charms might once have been, she could now boast of very few.

There were lines around her mouth and on her brow

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which told of suffering; and, as I judged it, not the calm, resigned suffering, which often leaves a sweet if sad expression on the face; but fierce, rebellious, constrained suffering, such as turns a young heart into an old one long before its time.

As she entered the room and bowed to me her face expressed undisguised surprise at seeing a visitor who was a stranger to her. I apologized for the lateness of my call; then hastened to tell her its object. She listened with polite impassibility. She made no comment when I repeatedly spoke of my so-styled sister as Lady Ferrand. It was clear that, as Philippa had said, Mrs. Wilson was convinced as to the valid nature of the marriage. I inveighed roundly against Sir Mervyn Ferrand's heartless conduct and scandalous neglect of his wife. My hearer shrugged her shoulders, and the meaning conveyed by the action was that, although she regretted family jars, they were no concern of hers. She seemed quite without interest in the matter; yet a suspicion that she was acting, indeed rather over-acting, a part, crossed my mind once or twice.

When I told her it was Lady Ferrand's intention to place herself to-morrow under my protection, she simply bowed. When I said that most likely we should leave England, and for a while travel on the continent, she said that my sister's health would no doubt be much benefited by the change.

"I may mention," she added, for the first time taking any real part in the talk, "that your sister's state is not quite all it should be. For the last day or two I have been thinking of sending for the medical man who attended her during her unfortunate confinement. He has not seen her for quite a week. I mentioned it to her this

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afternoon; but she appears to have taken an unaccountable dislike to him, and utterly refused to see him. I do not wish to alarm you—I merely mention this; no doubt you, her brother, will see to it."

The peculiar stress she laid on the word "brother" told me that I was right in thinking the woman was acting, and that not for one moment did my assumed fraternity deceive her. This was of no consequence.

"I am myself a doctor. Her health will be my care," I said. Then I rose.

"You are related to Sir Mervyn Ferrand, I believe, Mrs. Wilson?" I asked.

She gave me a quick look which might mean anything. "We are connections," she said carelessly.

"You must have been surprised at his sending his wife away at such a time?"

"I am not in the habit of feeling surprised at Sir Mervyn's actions. He wrote to me and told me that, knowing my circumstances were straitened, he had recommended a lady to come and live with me for a few months. When I found this lady was his wife, I own I was, for once, surprised."

From the emphasis which she laid on certain words, I knew it was but the fact of Philippa's being married to the scoundrel that surprised her, nothing else. I could see that Mrs. Wilson knew Sir Mervyn Ferrand thoroughly, and something told me that her relations with him were of a nature which might not bear investigation.

I bade her good-night, and walked back to my cottage with a heart in which sorrow, pity, love, hatred, exultation, and, it may be, hope, were strangely and inextricably mingled.

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CHAPTER III.

"THE WAGES OF SIN."

MORNING! No books; no idle, listless hours for me to-day. Plenty to do, plenty to think about; all sorts of arrangements to make. Farewell to my moody, sullen life. Farewell to my aimless, selfish existence. Henceforward I should have something worth living for—worth dying for, if needs be! Philippa was coming to me to-day; coming in grief, it is true; coming as a sister comes to a brother. Ah! after all the weary, weary waiting, I shall see her to-day—to-morrow, every day! If a man's devotion, homage, worship, and respect can in her own eyes reinstate my queen, I shall some day see the bloom come back to her cheek, the bright smile play once more round her mouth, the dark eyes again eloquent with happy thoughts. And then—and then! what should I care for the world or its sneers? To whom, save myself, should I be answerable? Then I might whisper in her ear, "Sweet, let the past vanish from our lives as a dream. Let happiness date from to-day."

Although Philippa would grace my poor cottage for one night only, I had a thousand preparations to make for her comfort. Fortunately I had a spare room, and, moreover, a furnished one. Not that I should have troubled, when I went into my seclusion, about such a superfluity as a guest-chamber; but as it happened I had

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bought the house and the furniture complete, so could offer my welcome guest fair accommodation for the night.

I summoned my stolid man. I told him that my sister was coming on a visit to me; that she would sleep here to-night, but that most likely we should go away to-morrow. He could stay and look after the house until I returned or sent him instructions what to do with it. William manifested no surprise. Had I told him to make preparations for the coming of my wife and five children, he would have considered it all a part of the day's work, and would have done his best to meet my requirements.

He set to work in his imperturbable, methodical, but handy way to get Philippa's room in trim. As soon as this was done, and the neglected chamber made cosey and warm-looking, I told him to borrow a horse and cart somewhere, and fetch the luggage from Mrs. Wilson's. He was to mention no names; simply to say that he had come for the luggage, and to ask if the lady had any message to send.

Then I sat down in the room which my love would occupy, and mused upon the strange but unhappy chance which was bringing her beneath my roof. I wished that I had an enchanter's wand to turn the humble garniture of the chamber into surroundings meet for my queenly Philippa. I wished that I had, at least, flowers with which I could deck her resting-place; for I remembered how passionately she loved flowers. Alas! I had not seen a flower for months.

Then I drew out Sir Mervyn Ferrand's letter, read it again and again, and cursed the writer in my heart.

William was away about two hours; then he made

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his appearance with some boxes. I was delighted to see these tangible signs that Philippa meant to keep her promise. Till that moment I had been troubled by something like the doubt, that after all she might, upon calm reflection, rescind the resolution formed in her excitement. Now her coming seemed to be a certainty.

Nevertheless, William brought no message; so there was nothing for me to do but wait patiently until she chose to cross my threshold.

Although my pleasing labors of love were ended, I was not left idle. There was another task to be done to-day. I set my teeth and sat down, thinking quietly as to the way in which it might be best performed. To-night I meant to stand face to face with that black-hearted scoundrel known as Sir Mervyn Ferrand!

I consulted the time-table. His letter named no particular hour; but I saw that if he carried out his expressed intention of being here to-night, there was but one train by which he could come; there was but one way from Roding to the house at which Philippa had been staying. He meant to walk, his letter said; this might be in order to escape observation. The train was due at Roding at seven o'clock. The weather was cold; a man would naturally walk fast. Mrs. Wilson's house must be four miles from the station. Let me start from there just before the train arrives, and I should probably meet him about half-way on his journey. It would be dark, but I should know him. I should know him among a thousand. There on the open lonely road Sir Mervyn Ferrand, coming gayly, and in his worldly cynicism certain of cajoling, buying off, or in some other way silencing the woman who had in an evil day trusted to his honor and love, would meet, not her, but the man

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who from the first had sworn that a wrong to Philippa should be more than a wrong to himself! He would meet this man, and be called to account.

Stern and sinister as were my thoughts—freely and unreservedly as I record them: as indeed I endeavor in this tale to record everything—I do not wish to be misjudged. It is true that in my present mood I was bent upon avenging Philippa with my own hand; true that I meant, if possible, to take at some time or another this man's life; but at least no thought of taking any advantage of an unarmed or unsuspecting man entered into my scheme of vengeance. I designed no murderous attack. But it was my intention to stop the man on his path; to confront him and tell him that his villany was known to me; that Philippa had fled to me for aid; that she was now in my custody; and that I, who stood in the position of her brother, demanded the so-called satisfaction which, by the old-fashioned code of honor, was due from the man who had ruthlessly betrayed a woman. Well I knew that it was probable he would laugh at me —tell me that the days of duelling were over, and refuse to grant my request. Then I meant to see if insults could warm his noble blood; if my hand on his cheek could bring about the result which I desired. If this failed, I would follow him abroad, cane him and spit upon him in public places.

A wild scheme for these prosaic law-abiding days; yet the only one that was feasible. It may be said that I should have taken steps to have caused the miscreant to be arrested for bigamy. But what proof of his crime had we as yet, save his own unsigned confession? Who was to move in the matter—Philippa—myself? We did not even know where this wife of whom he had spoken

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lived, or where she died. There were a hundred ways in which he might escape from justice, but whether he was punished for his sin or allowed to go scot-free, Philippa's name and wrongs must be bruited about, her shame made public. No; there was but one course to take, and but one person to take it. It rested with me to avenge the wrongs of the woman I loved by the good old-fashioned way of a life against a life.

Truly, as I said, I had now plenty to live for!

The hours went by, yet Philippa came not. I grew restless and uneasy as the dusk began to make the road, up which I gazed almost continually, dim and indistinct. When the short winter's day was over, and the long dark night had fairly begun, my restlessness turned into fear. I walked out of my house and paced my garden to and fro. I blamed myself for having yielded so lightly to Philippa's wish—her command rather—that I should on no account fetch her. But then, whenever did I resist a wish, much less a command of hers? Oh, that I had been firm this once!

The snow-storm of the previous evening had not lasted long—not long enough to thoroughly whiten the world. The day had been fine and frosty, but I knew that the wind had changed since the sun went down. It was warmer, a change which I felt sure presaged a heavy downfall of snow or rain. There was a moon, a fitful moon; for clouds were flying across it, dark clouds, which I guessed would soon gather coherence and volume, and veil entirely that bright face, which now only showed itself at irregular intervals.

The minutes were passing away. I grew nervous and excited. Why does she not come? My hope had been to see my poor girl safely housed before I started to exe

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cute my other task. Why does she not come? Time, precious time, is slipping by! In the hope of meeting her, I walked for some distance up the road. "Why does she delay?" I groaned. Even now I should be on my way to Roding, or I may miss my prey. Heavens! can it be that she is waiting to see this man once more? Never! never! Perish the thought!

But, all the same, every fibre in my body quivered at the bare supposition of such a thing.

I could bear the suspense no longer. For the hundredth time I glanced at my watch. It wanted but ten minutes to seven o'clock, and at that hour I had resolved to start from Mrs. Wilson's, on my way to Roding. Yet now I dared not leave my own house. Any moment might bring Philippa. What would she think if I were not there to receive and welcome her.

Five more precious moments gone! I stamped in my rage. After all, I can only do one half of my task; the sweet, but not the stern half. Shall I, indeed, do either? The train must now be close to Roding. In an hour everything may be lost. The man will see her before she leaves the house. He will persuade her. She will listen to his words; for did he not once love her? He must have loved her! After all, he broke the laws for the sake of possessing her, and—cursed thought!—she loved him then; and she is but a woman!

So I tortured myself until my state of mind grew unbearable. At all hazard, I must prevent Ferrand from meeting Philippa. Oh, why had she not come as she promised? Could it be she was detained against her will? In spite of her uninterested manner, I distrusted the woman I had seen last night. It is now past seven o'clock. Philippa's house, from which I had reckoned

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my time, was nearly three miles away. I must give up my scheme of vengeance. I must go in search of Philippa. If I do not meet her I must call at Mrs. Wilson's, find out what detains her, and if needful bear her away by force.

By this time my steps had brought me back to my own house. I called William, and told him I was going to walk up the road and meet my expected guest. If by any chance I should miss her, he was to welcome her on my behalf, and tell her the reason for my absence.

"Best take a lantern, sir," said William; "moon'll soon be hidden, and them roads is precious rough."

"I can't be bothered with that great horn affair," I said, rather testily.

"Take the little one—the bull's-eye—that's better than nothing," said William. To humor him I put it into my pocket.

I ran at the top of my speed to the house at which I had last night left Philippa. It took me nearly half an hour getting there. I rang the bell impetuously. The door was opened by a maid-servant. I inquired for Mrs. Farmer, knowing that Philippa had passed under this name to all except her hostess. To my surprise I was told that she had left the house, on foot and alone, some little while ago. The maid believed she was not going to return, as her luggage had that morning been sent for.

The first effect of this intelligence was to cause me to blame my haste. I must have missed her; no doubt passed her on the road. No; such a thing was impossible. The way was a narrow one. The moon still gave some light. If I had met Philippa, I must have seen her. She must have seen me, and would then have stopped me. She could not have gone the way I came.

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But where was she? In what direction was I to seek her? Argue the matter as I would—loth as I was to allow myself to be convinced, I was bound to decide that she must have taken the path to Roding. There was no other. She had gone, even as I was going, to meet Ferrand. She may have started intending to come to me; but at the last moment a desire to see the man once more—I fondly hoped for the purpose of heaping reproaches on his head—had mastered her. Yes, whatever her object might be, she had gone to meet him. And my heart sank as conviction was carried to it by the remembrance that coupled with her refusal to permit me to fetch her was an assertion that she had something to do before she came to me. That, as I now read it, could be but one thing—to meet this man!

Never again, if I can help it, shall his voice strike on her ear! Never again shall their eyes meet! Never again shall the touch of even his finger contaminate her! Let me follow, and stand between her and the scoundrel. If they meet he will wound her to the heart. Her pride will rise; she will threaten. Then the coward will try another line. He will plead for mercy; he will swear he still loves her; he will bait his hook with promises. She will listen; hesitate; perhaps yield, and find herself once more deceived. Then she will be lost to me forever. Now she is, in my eyes, pure as when first we met. Let me haste on, overtake, pass her; meet her betrayer, and, if needful, strike him to the ground.

As I turned from the house I became aware that a great and sudden change had come over the night. It seemed to me that, even in the few minutes which I had spent in considering what to do, the heavy clouds had banked and massed together. It was all but pitch-dark;

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so dark that I paused, and drawing from my pocket the lantern with which William's foresight had provided me, managed after several trials to light it. Then, impatient at the delay, I sped up the road.

I was now almost facing the wind. All at once, sharp and quick, I felt the blinding snow on my face. The wind moaned through the leafless branches on either side of the road. The snow-flakes whirled madly here and there. Even in my excitement I was able to realize the fact that never before had I seen in England so fierce a snow-storm, or one which came on so suddenly. And, like myself, Philippa was abroad, and exposed to its full fury. Heavens! she might lose her way, and wander about all night.

This fear quickened my steps. I forced my way on through the mad storm. For the time all thought of Sir Mervyn Ferrand and vengeance left my heart. All I now wanted was to find Philippa; to lead her home, and see her safe beneath my roof. "Surely," I said, as I battled along, "she cannot have gone much farther."

I kept a sharp lookout—if, indeed, it can be called a lookout; for the whirling snow made everything, save what was within a few feet of me, invisible. I strained my ears to catch the faintest cry or other sound. I went on, flashing my lantern first on one and then on the other side of the road. My dread was that Philippa, utterly unable to fight against the white tempest, might be crouching under one of the banks, and if so I might pass without seeing her or even attracting her attention. My doing so on such a night as this might mean her death.

Oh, why had she not come as promised? Why had she gone to meet the man who had so foully wronged her? After what had happened, she could not, dared

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not love him. And for a dreary comfort I recalled the utter bitterness of her accent last night when she turned to me and said, "Basil, did you ever hate a man?" No, she could not love him!

These thoughts brought my craving for vengeance back to my mind. Where was Ferrand? By all my calculations, taking into account the time wasted at starting, I should by now have met him. Perhaps he had not come, after all. Perhaps the look of the weather had frightened him, and he had decided to stay at Roding for the night. I raged at the thought! If only I knew that Philippa was safely housed, nothing, in my present frame of mind, would have suited me better than to have met him on this lonely road, in the midst of this wild storm. If Philippa were only safe!

Still no sign of her. I began to waver in my mind. What if my first supposition, that I had passed her on the road, was correct? She might be now at my cottage, wondering what had become of me. Should I go farther or turn back? But what would be my feelings if I did the latter, and found when I arrived home that she had not made her appearance?

I halted, irresolute, in the centre of the road. Instinctively I beat my hands together to promote circulation. I had left my home hurriedly, and had made no provision for the undergoing of such an ordeal as this terrible, unprecedented snow-storm inflicted. In spite of the speed at which I had travelled, my hands and feet were growing numbed, my face smarted with the cold. Heaven help me to decide aright, whether to go on or turn back!

The decision was not left to me. Suddenly, close at hand, I heard a wild peal, a scream of laughter which

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made my blood run cold. Swift from the whirling, tossing, drifting snow emerged a tall gray figure. It swept past me like the wind; but as it passed me I knew that my quest was ended—that Philippa was found!

She vanished in a second, before the terror which rooted me to the spot had passed away. Then I turned and, fast as I could run, followed her, crying as I went, "Philippa! Philippa!"

I soon overtook her; but so dark was the night that I was almost touching her before I saw her shadowy, ghost-like form. I threw my arms round her and held her. She struggled violently in my grasp.

"Philippa, dearest! it is I, Basil," I said, bending close to her ear.

The sound of my voice seemed to calm her, or I should rather say she ceased to struggle.

"Thank Heaven, I have found you!" I said. "Let us get back as soon as possible."

"Back! No! Go on, go on!" she exclaimed. "On, on, on, up the road yet awhile—on through the storm, through the snow—on till you see what I have left behind me! On till you see the wages of sin—the wages of sin!"

Her words came like bullets from a mitrailleuse. Through the night I could see her face gleaming whiter than the snow on her hood. I could see her great, fixed, dark eyes full of nameless horror.

"Dearest, be calm," I said, and strove to take her hands in mine.

As I tried to gain possession of her right hand something fell from it, and, although the road was now coated with snow, a metallic sound rang out as it touched the ground. Mechanically I stooped and picked up the fallen object.

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As I did so Philippa with a wild cry wrested herself from the one hand whose numbed grasp still sought to retain her, and with a frenzied reiteration of the words, "The wages of sin!" fled from me, and was lost in the night.

Even as I rushed in pursuit I shuddered as the sense of feeling told me what thing it was I had picked up from the snowy ground. It was a small pistol! Cold as the touch of the metal must have been, it seemed to burn me like a coal of fire. Impulsively, thoughtlessly, as I ran I hurled the weapon from me, far, far away. Why should it have been in Philippa's hand this night?

I ran madly on, but not for long. My foot caught in a stone, and I fell, half stunned and quite breathless, to the ground. It was some minutes before I recovered myself sufficiently to once more stand erect. Philippa must have obtained a start which, coupled with her frenzied speed, almost precluded the possibility of my overtaking her.

Moreover, a strange, uncontrollable impulse swayed me. The touch of that deadly weapon still burned my hand. Philippa's words still rang in my ears. "On, on, on, up the road yet awhile!" she had cried. What did she mean? What had been done to-night?

I must retrace my steps. I must see! I must know! Philippa is flying through the cold, dark, deadly night; but her frame is but the frame of a woman. She must soon grow exhausted, perhaps sink senseless on the road. Nevertheless, the dreadful fears which are growing in my mind must be set at rest; then I can resume the pursuit. At all cost I must know what has happened!

Once more I turned and faced the storm. Heavens! anything might happen on such a night as this! I went

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on and on, flashing my lantern as I went on the centre and each side of the road. I went some distance past that spot where I judged that Philippa had swept by me. Then suddenly, with a cry of horror, I stopped short. At my very feet, in the middle of the highway, illumined by the disk of light cast by my lantern, lay a whitened mass, and as my eye fell upon it I knew only too well the meaning of Philippa's wild exclamation, "The wages of sin! The wages of sin!"

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CHAPTER IV.

AT ALL COST, SLEEP!

DEAD! Before I kneeled beside him, and, after unbuttoning his coat, laid my hand on his breast, I knew the man was dead. Before I turned the lantern on his white face I knew who the man was. Sir Mervyn Ferrand had paid for his sin with his life! It needed little professional skill to determine the cause of his death. A bullet fired, it seemed to me, at close quarters had passed absolutely through the heart. He must have fallen without a moan. Killed, I knew, by the hand of the woman he had wronged.

A sneering smile yet lingered on his set features. I could even imagine the words which had accompanied it, when swift and sudden, without one moment's grace for repentance or confession, death had been meted out to him. At one moment he stood erect and full of life, mocking, it may be, her who had trusted him and had been betrayed; at the next, before the sentence he was speaking was completed, he lay lifeless at her feet, with the snow-flakes beginning to form his winding-sheet!

Oh, it was vengeance! swift, deadly vengeance! But why, oh, why had she wreaked it? Philippa, my peerless Philippa, a murderess! Oh, it was too fearful, too horrible! I must be dreaming. All my own thoughts of revenge left me. It was for the time pity, sheer pity,

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I felt for the man, cut off in the prime of his life. While I knew he was alive I could look forward to and picture the minute when we should stand coolly seeking to kill one another; but now that he was dead, I hated him no longer. Ah! death is a sacred thing. Dead! Sir Mervyn Ferrand dead, and slain by Philippa!

It could not be true! It should not be true! Yet I shuddered as I remembered the passion she had thrown into those words, "Basil, did you ever hate a man?" I gave a low cry of anguish as I remembered how I had hurled from me the pistol she had let fall—the very weapon which had done the dreadful deed.

Killed by Philippa! Not in a sudden burst of uncontrollable passion, but with deliberate intent. She must have gone armed to meet him. She must have shot him through the heart; must have seen him fall. Then, only then, the horrible deed which she had wrought must have been fully realized! Then she had turned and fled from the spot in a frenzy. Oh, my poor girl! my poor girl!

Utterly bewildered by my anguish, I rose from my knees and stood for a while beside the corpse. It was in that moment I learned how much I really loved the woman who had done this thing. Over all my grief and horror this love rose paramount. At all cost I must save her—save her from the hands of justice; save her from the fierce elements which her tender frame was even at this moment braving. And as I recalled how she had sought me yesterday with the tale of her wrong—how she had wildly fled from me, a few minutes ago, madly, blindly into the night; as I thought of the injuries she had suffered, and which had led her to shed this man's blood; as I contrasted her in her present position with

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what she was when first I knew her and loved her, no pity began to fade from my heart; my thoughts toward the lifeless form at my feet grew stern and sombre, and I found myself beginning, by the old code of an eye for an eye, to justify, although I regretted, Philippa's fearful act. Right or wrong, she was the woman I loved; and I swore I would save her from the consequences of her crime, even—heaven help me!—if the accusation, when made, must fall upon my shoulders.

Yet it was not the beginning of any scheme to evade justice which induced me to raise the dead body and bear it to the side of the road, where I placed it under the low bank on which the hedge grew. It was the reverence which one pays to death made me do this. I could not leave the poor wretch lying in the very middle of the highway, for the first passer-by to stumble against. To-morrow he would, of course, be found. To-morrow the hue and cry would be out! To-morrow Philippa, my Philippa, would— Oh, heavens! never, never, never!

So I laid what was left of Sir Mervyn Ferrand reverentially by the side of the lonely road. I even tried to close his glassy eyes, and I covered his face with his own handkerchief. Then with heart holding fear and anguish enough for a lifetime, I turned and went in search of the poor unhappy girl.

Where should I seek her? Who knew what her remorse may have urged her to do? Who knew whither her horror may have driven her? It needs but to find Philippa lifeless on the road to complete the heaviest tale of grief which can be exacted from one man in one short night! I clenched my teeth and rushed on.

I had the road all to myself. No one was abroad in

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such weather. Indeed, few persons were seen at night in any weather in this lonely part of the country. I made straight for my own house. The dismal thought came to me, that unless Philippa kept to the road she was lost to me forever. If she strayed to the right or to the left, how on such a night could I possibly find her? My one hope was, that she would go straight to my cottage; so thither I made the best of my way. If she had not arrived, I must get what assistance I could, and seek for her in the fields to the right and left of the road. It was a dreary comfort to remember that all the ponds and spaces of water were frozen six inches thick!

I hesitated a moment when I reached her late residence. Should I inquire if she had returned thither? No; when morning revealed the ghastly event of the night, my having done so would awake suspicion. Let me first go home.

Home at last! In a moment I shall know the worst. I opened the slide of my lantern, which was still alight, and threw the rays on the path which led to my door. My heart gave a great bound of thankfulness. There on the snow, not yet obliterated by more recent flakes, were the prints of a small foot. Philippa, as I prayed but scarcely dared to hope she might, had come straight to my house.

My man opened the door for me. It was well I had seen those footprints, as my knowledge of Philippa's arrival enabled me to assume a natural air.

"My sister has come?" I asked.

"Yes, sir; about a quarter of an hour ago."

"We missed each other on the road. What a night!" I said, throwing off my snow-covered coat.

"Where is she now?" I asked.

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"In the sitting-room, sir." Then, lowering his voice, William added, "She seemed just about in a tantrum when she found you weren't at home. I expect we shall find her a hard lady to please."

William, in spite of his stolidity, occasionally ventured upon some liberty when addressing me.

His words greatly surprised me. I forced myself to make some laughing rejoinder; then I turned the handle of the door and entered the room in which Philippa had taken refuge.

Oh, how my heart throbbed! What would she say to me? What could I, fresh from that dreadful scene, say to her? Would she excuse or palliate, would she simply confess or boldly justify her crime? Would she plead her wrongs in extenuation? Would she assert that in a moment of ungovernable rage she had done the deed? No matter what she said; she was still Philippa, and even at the cost of my own life and honor I would save her.

Yet as I advanced into the room a shudder ran through me. Fresh to my mind came the remembrance of that white face, that still form, lying as I had left it, with the pure white snow falling thickly around it.

Philippa was sitting in front of the fire. Her hat was removed; her dark hair dishevelled and gleaming wet with the snow which had melted in it. She must have heard me enter and close the door, but she took no notice. As I approached her she turned her shoulder upon me in a pettish way, and as one who by the action means to signify displeasure. I came to her side and stood over her, waiting for her to look up and speak first. She must speak first! What can I say, after all that has happened to-night?

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But she kept a stony silence—kept her eyes still turned from mine. At last I called her by her name, and bending down, looked into her face.

Its expression was one of sullen anger, and, moreover, anger which seemed to deepen as she heard my voice. She made a kind of contemptuous gesture, as if waving me aside.

"Philippa," I said, as sternly as I could, "speak to me!"

I laid my hand upon her arm. She shook it off fiercely, and then started to her feet.

"You ask me to speak to you," she said; "you, who have treated me like this! Oh, it is shameful! shameful! shameful! I come through storm and snow—come to you, who were to welcome me as a brother! Where are you? Away, your wretched servant tells me. Why are you away? I trusted you! Oh, you are a pretty brother! If you had cared for me or respected me, you would have been here to greet me. No! you are all in a league—all in a league to ruin me! Now I am here, what will you do? Poison me, of course! kill me, and make away with me, even as that other doctor killed and made away with my poor child! He did! I say he did! I saw him do it! 'A child of shame,' he said; so he killed it! All, all, all,—even you—you, whom I trusted—leagued against me!"

She was trembling with excitement. Her words ran one into the other. It was as much as I could do to follow them; yet the above is but a brief condensation of what she said. With unchecked volubility she continued to heap reproaches and accusations, many of which were of the most extravagant and frivolous nature, on my head. At last she was silent, and reseated herself in her

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former attitude; and the sullen, discontented, ill-used look again settled on her face.

And yet, although I, who loved her above all the world, was the object of her fierce reproaches, no words I had as yet listened to came more sweetly to my ear than these. A great joy swept through me; a tide of relief bore me to comparative happiness. Whatever dreadful deed the poor girl had that night accomplished, she was morally innocent. Philippa was not accountable for her actions!

As a doctor, I read the truth at once. The rapid flow of words, the changing moods, the vehement excitement, the sullen air, the groundless suspicions—one and all carried conviction, and told me what was wrong. Mrs. Wilson's words of yesterday, which warned me that Philippa's health should be inquired into, added absolute certainty.

My professional brethren who may happen to read this will understand me when I say that, although it is long since I have practised as a doctor, I am sorely tempted, as I reach this stage of my story, to give in detail the particulars which induced me to arrive at such a belief. No physician, no surgeon, lives who does not feel it his duty as well as his pleasure to give an accurate account of any out-of-the-common case which has come under his notice. But I am not writing these pages for the benefit of science; and having no wish to make my tale assume the authority of a hospital report, shall restrain myself, and on technical points be as brief as possible.

In short, then, Philippa had fallen a victim to that mania which not uncommonly shows itself after the birth of a child—that dread, mysterious disease which may, at the moment when everything seems going well,

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turn a house of joy into a house of mourning; a disease the source of which I have no hesitation in saying has not yet been properly traced and investigated. So far as I know, there is no monograph on the subject, or certainly there was none at that time.

Still, it is admitted by all the authorities that this species of insanity is not unfrequently produced by a severe mental shock, especially when that shock is accompanied by an overwhelming sense of shame. Statistics show us that unmarried women who are mothers, and feel the degradation of such a position acutely, are peculiarly liable to be attacked by the mysterious malady. Esquirol was, I believe, the first to notice this fact, and the correctness of his view has subsequently been confirmed by many others.

Such being the case, it is small wonder that Philippa, waking yesterday morning to receive the intelligence that her marriage with Sir Mervyn Ferrand had been a farce, should have been thrown into a state extremely susceptible to the attack of the disease. Her careless exposure of herself to the wintry air, when last night she sought me and claimed my aid, most probably hastened the attack of the foe. Mrs. Wilson had noticed her strange manner. I myself have remarked upon her rapid changes from calmness to excitability. It was clear to me that even when she visited me last night the mischief had begun to develop itself. I blamed my blindness bitterly. I ought to have seen what was wrong. Considering her agitated state, I ought to have been warned, and have taken precautions; but I had attributed those fitful changes, the meaning of which was now only too plain to me, to the natural agitation experienced by a passionate yet pure-minded woman, who found herself

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betrayed and brought to shame. Oh, had I but guessed the real cause, or rather the way in which her grief had affected her, all the dark work of that night might have been left undone!

Although in many ways it added to the difficulties and dangers which surrounded us, the discovery of the truth was an unspeakable relief to me. No right-minded man could now call the poor girl guilty of crime. The man's blood was indeed on her hands; yet she had shed it, not knowing what she did. Her frenzy must then have been at its height. The idea of his coming that night must in some way have occurred to her. The desire to see him must have driven her to go and meet him. Her wrongs —perhaps the dread she now felt of him may have induced her to arm herself; perhaps she carried the weapon for self-protection. Any way, she was mad when she started; she was mad when she drew the trigger; she was mad when she broke from my grasp; she was mad now as she sat by my fire, eying me with morose, suspicious glances. She was mad—and innocent!

Her manner toward me troubled me but little. It is a well-known peculiarity of the disease that the patient turns with hatred from those who were the nearest and dearest to her. Fits of sullen, stubborn silence, alternating with fierce outbursts of vituperation, are the most common characteristics of the mania. Hideous, startling as it is to see the change wrought in the sufferer, the malady is by no means of such an alarming nature as it seems. In fact the majority of cases are treated with perfect success.

But all this is professional talk. Again I say that the discovery of Philippa's state of mind was an immense relief to me. My conscience was cleared of a weight which

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was pressing upon it. I felt braced up to use every effort, and thoroughly justified in following whatever course I thought best. Moreover, a new relationship was now established between Philippa and myself. For a while every feeling save one must be banished. We were now doctor and patient.

After much persuasion, I induced her to let me feel her pulse. As I expected, I found it up nearly to 120. This did not alarm me much, as in the course of my practice I had seen several of these cases. The preliminary treatment was simple as A B C; at all cost sleep must be obtained.

Fortunately, I had a well-stocked medicine-chest. In a few minutes I had prepared the strongest dose of opium which I dared to administer. In such a case as the present I knew that no driblets would avail; so I measured out no less than sixty drops of laudanum. Sleep the girl must have. That poor seething, boiling brain must by artificial means be forced to rest for hours. After that rest I should be able to say what chance there was of saving life and reason.

But preparing a dose of medicine, and making a patient like this take it, are two different things. I tried every art, every persuasion. I implored and commanded. I threatened and insisted. Philippa was obdurate. Poor soul! she knew I meant to poison her. On my part, I knew that unless she swallowed that narcotic to-night, her case was all but hopeless.

I rested for a while; then I sent for lukewarm water. After some resistance she suffered me to bathe her throbbing temples. The refreshing coolness which followed the operation was so grateful to her that she let me repeat

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the action again and again. A softer and more contented look settled on her beautiful face.

I seized the moment. Once more I pressed the potion upon her. This time successfully. My heart trembled with joy as I saw her swallow the drug. Now she might be saved!

I still continued the comforting laving of her temples, and waited until the drug took its due effect. By and by that moment came. The large dark eyes closed, the weary head sank heavily on my shoulder, and I knew that Philippa had entered upon a term of merciful oblivion.

I waited until her sleep was sound as the sleep of death; then I summoned my man. I had already told him that my sister was very ill. Between us we bore her to her room and laid her on the bed. I loosened her dress, cut the wet boots from her cold feet; did all I could to promote warmth and such comfort as was possible under the circumstances. Then I left her, sleeping that heavy sleep which I prayed might last unbroken for hours, and hours, and hours.

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CHAPTER V.

A WHITE TOMB.

FROM the moment when the true state of Philippa's mind flashed upon me, to the moment when I left her sleeping that heavy sleep, I had little time to think of anything else than the best means of saving her life, and, if possible, her reason. True, throughout the whole of my operations to effect this end, a dim sort of horror pervaded me—a recollection of the ghastly object which lay on the roadside, some three miles from us; but it was not until I turned from my patient's door that the terrible situation in which she was placed presented itself to me in all its dread entirety. Half broken-hearted, I threw myself wearily into my chair, and covered my face with my hands.

What was to be done? What was to be done? To-morrow morning the body would be found. I felt certain that when inquiry was made suspicion would at once point toward Philippa. Mrs. Wilson knew of her starting from home in the evening, alone and on foot. She knew, moreover, that Sir Mervyn Ferrand was her husband; that he had ill-used her. She would most certainly know to whom Philippa had fled. It did not follow that because I was ignorant as to who were my neighbors they knew nothing about me. At any rate, William, my man, would know the truth. So far as I could see, to-morrow

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or, by the latest, the next day Philippa would be arrested for the crime. Most probably, I should also be included in the arrest. For that I seemed to care nothing; except that it might hinder me from helping my poor girl.

Any hope of removing Philippa—there, put it in plain words—any hope of flight, for days, even weeks, was vain. Let everything go as well as can be in such cases, the girl must be kept in seclusion and quiet for at least a fortnight or three weeks. I groaned as I thought of what would happen if Philippa was arrested and carried before the magistrates, accused of the awful crime. From that moment until the day of her death she would be insane.

Yet, what help was there for it? The moment the deed is known—the moment Mrs. Wilson learns that Sir Mervyn Ferrand has been found shot through the heart, she will let it be known that Lady Ferrand is at hand; and Lady Ferrand, who has been passing under the name of Mrs. Farmer, will be sought and found. And then—and then?

Even if she did not die at once—even if she recovered—oh, the shame of the trial! No jury could or would convict her: but for Philippa, my queen, to stand in the dock, to plead for her life; to know that, whether convicted or acquitted, the deed was done by her; to know that all England is talking of her wrongs and her vengeance—horrible! horrible! It shall never be. Rather will I give her a draught of opium heavy enough to close her eyes forever. There will be plenty more of the drug left for me!

Fool that I was! Why did I do things by halves? Why, for her sake, did I not hide the dead man where none would find him? Why did I not rifle his pockets,

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so that suspicion should have pointed to a vulgar murderer; some one who had killed him for mere plunder? Why did I not, at least, destroy any letters or papers which were about him? Identification might then have been rendered difficult, and perhaps been delayed for weeks. In that time I might have saved her.

Why do I not do this now? I started to my feet; then sank back into my chair. No; not even for Philippa's sake could I go again to that spot. If I did so, I should return as mad as she is now.

Not being able to bring myself to adopt the gruesome alternative, I could do nothing save wait events—nothing, at least, to avert the consequences of her delirious act.

But for her something must be done. How could she, in her frenzied state, be left here—her only companions two men? Nurses must be at once procured. I summoned William, and told him he must go to London by the first train in the morning.

William would have received my instructions to go to the Antipodes with imperturbability. He merely expressed a doubt as to whether any one would be able to get to London to-morrow on account of the snow. I walked to the window and looked out.

The night was still one mad whirl of snow-flakes. The window-panes were half covered by such as managed to find a resting-place there. As I watched what I could see of the wild white dance, I found myself thinking that by now that dead man on the road must be covered an inch—must have lost shape and outline. I shivered as I turned away.

"They are sure to keep the line to town open," I said. "If you can get to Roding, you can get to London."

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"Oh, I can get to Roding right enough!" said William.

Then I told him what he was to do. He was to take a letter to one of the Nursing Institutions, and bring back two nurses with him. No matter what the weather was when they reached Roding, they were to come to my house at once, even if they had to hire twenty horses to drag them there. He was also to get me a few drugs which I might want.

William said no more. He nodded, to show that he understood me; and I knew that if it were possible to do my bidding it would be done.

Of his own accord he then brought me food. I ate, for I knew that I should want all my strength to support the anxieties of the next day or two.

I stayed up the whole night. Oh, that awful night! shall I ever forget it? The solitude—the raging snow-storm outside—the poor creature to whose side I crept noislessly every half an hour. She lay there with a face like marble, calm and beautiful. The long, dark lashes swept her pale cheek. The only movement was the regular rise and fall of the bosom. Oh, happy oblivion! Oh, dreaded wakening! As I looked at her, in spite of the love I bore her, I believe that, had I thought such a prayer would be answered, I should for her sake have prayed that those lashes might never again be lifted.

Morning at last broke on my dreary vigil. Philippa still slept. I returned to the sitting-room and drew back the curtains from the window. Yes; it was morning—such a morning as leaden, wintry skies can give. It was still snowing as heavily as, if not more heavily than, it had snowed last night. For twelve hours the flakes had fallen without intermission.

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There was little wind now; it had dropped, I knew, about an hour ago. The world, so far as I could see, was clad in white: but the snow lay unevenly. The wind had blown it into drifts. On my garden path its depth might be counted by inches; against my garden wall by feet.

William now made his appearance. He prepared some breakfast for himself, and then, having done justice to it, started for Roding. It occurred to me that he might be the first to find the object which lay on the roadside.

Except that so doing might delay him and cause him to miss his train, this mattered little. I was now calmly awaiting the inevitable. Some one must make the discovery. However, as I wanted the nurses, I said to him:

"Remember this is life and death. Nothing must stop you." He touched his hat in a reassuring manner, and tramped off through the snow.

I returned to my patient's bedside and sat watching her, and waiting for her to awake. She had now slept for nearly eleven hours, and I knew that return to life might take place at any moment. I longed for, and yet I dreaded, her awakening. When the effects of the opiate were gone, how should I find her? Alas! I knew that the chances were a thousand to one that her brain would still be full of strange delusions; that she would turn from me, as she turned last night, with loathing and anger. But my greatest fear was that she would, upon coming to herself, or rather to her poor insane self, be conscious of the act she had accomplished. It was the fear of this which made me wish that the opium would hold her in its drowsy grasp for hours longer.

This wish was granted. Hour after hour I sat by her

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motionless form. Now and again I glanced from the beautiful, senseless face, and looking out of the window saw the snow still falling. Would my messenger ever be able to reach town; if he did so, would he be able to return? I was bound to have a woman's aid. The presence of the roughest daughter of the plough would be welcome to me when Philippa awoke. And it was now time she did so.

Although I felt her pulse almost every other minute, and could find no reason for alarm, I am bound to say that her long sleep, protracted far beyond any I had in my experience seen produced by the exhibition of narcotics, rendered me very uneasy. I shall, I am sure, scarcely be credited when I say that Philippa's unconsciousness lasted for sixteen hours—from half-past nine at night to half-past one on the following afternoon. I began then to think the duration abnormal, and determined to take some steps toward arousing her.

But I was spared the responsibility. She stirred on the couch. Her head turned languidly on the pillow. Her dark eyes opened, closed, and opened again. She looked at me in a dazed manner, not at first seeming to know me, or to understand why I was near her, or where she was. A prey to the wildest anxiety, I leaned over her, and waited until she spoke.

Little by little her bewilderment seemed to leave her. Her eyes rested with curious inquiry upon mine. "Basil," she said, faintly, but in a tone of surprise, "you here! Where am I?"

"Under my roof—your brother's roof," I said.

"Ah! I remember," she said, with a deep sigh. Then she closed her eyes, and once more seemed to sleep.

What did she remember? It seemed to me too great

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a mercy to expect that those hours of oblivion had effected a cure, but my hope was that she did not remember what had happened when she met Sir Mervyn Ferrand on the road. I was almost trembling with excitement. I was longing to really know in what state her mind was. Besides, I thought she had slept as long as was good for her. I took her hands and called her by name.

Once more she opened her eyes. They expressed no fear of me, no dislike to me. They conveyed no reproach. They were calm, sad, weary, but gave no evidence of any mental disorder.

"Have I been ill long, Basil?" she asked.

"Not very long. You are going to get better soon.

"I came to your house, did I not?"

"Yes; and here I mean to keep you. Do you feel weak?"

"Very weak. Basil, I have dreamed such horrible things."

"You have been feverish and delirious. People like that always fancy strange things."

She was indeed as weak as a child; but for the time, at least, she was perfectly sane. I could have cried for joy as I heard her faint but collected words. I ventured to hope that I had before me one of those very rare cases —such as I had seen described, but had not as yet met with—where the patient awakes from the long, artificially produced sleep perfectly free from all maniacal symptoms. If this were so with Philippa, if the return of reason were to be permanent, I knew that a few weeks' careful nursing and judicious treatment might quite restore her to health. Even as this comforting thought came to me, I remembered the peril in which

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she stood. To-morrow—ay, even to-day—the thing which I dreaded might happen, and sweep away all the good the narcotic had done her.

She was now fully awake, and perfectly quiet. I gave her some refreshment; then seeing she was lying in peaceful silence, I thought it better to leave her. As I quitted her room I drew down the blind, fearing that the whirling snow might bring recollections which it was my one wish to keep from invading her mind.

The long dreary day wore away. The light faded, and another night began. Philippa still lay calm, silent, and almost apathetic. I did nothing to rouse her. I went to her side as seldom as possible. I feared that her seeing me might recall the events of the last night, and that recollections so awakened might destroy all the good which I felt sure had been accomplished by the long hours of oblivion and quiet. Could I have deputed the task to another, I would not have even shown myself to my patient. Most anxiously, as evening came, I awaited the appearance of my faithful William and the nurses.

Would they be able to reach us in such weather? It was still snowing fiercely. For more than twenty-four hours the mad white revel had continued without intermission. Indeed, that storm which burst upon the world as I turned from Philippa's house on the preceding night is now historical; it was the beginning of the heaviest and the longest fall which the record of fifty years can show. For two nights and a day the snow came down in what may almost be called drifting masses. During that dismal day I saw from the window the heaps against the wall grow deeper and deeper, and even in my preoccupied state of mind found myself marvelling at the sustained fury of the storm.

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At eleven o'clock at night I sadly gave up all hope of the much-needed assistance arriving. After all, it seemed that William had found it impossible to fight against the weather; so I made my preparations for another night of solitary watchfulness. I was all but worn out with fatigue; yet I dared not sleep. If the mania returned, what might happen, were I not at hand to restrain Philippa's actions? My hope that the madness had really left my patient, not, if she were properly treated, to return, was a growing one, but not yet strong enough to allow me to leave her for any length of time.

My delight then may be imagined when, looking for the hundredth time up the road, I saw close at hand two flashing lights, and knew that William, the faithful, had done my bidding. In a few minutes two respectable women from one of the best of the London Nursing Institutions were within my walls.

The train had, of course, been late, very late. At one or two places on the line it had almost given up the battle, and settled down quietly until dug out; but steam and iron had conquered, and at last it did get to Roding. There William, knowing my dire necessity, offered such a magnificent bribe that he soon found an enterprising carriage proprietor who was willing to make the attempt to force two horses and a carriage over the six miles of road between Roding and my house. The attempt was successful, although the rate of progression was slow; and William triumphantly ushered his charges into my presence.

After giving them time for rest and refreshment, I explained the nature of the case, set out the treatment I wished to be adopted, and then led them to Philippa. I left the poor girl in their charge for the night, then

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went to take the sleep of which I stood so much in need.

But before going to bed I saw William. I dreaded to hear him say what gruesome sight he had seen that morning; yet I was bound to learn if the deed had yet been made public.

"Did you manage to get to Roding all right this morning?" I asked with assumed carelessness.

"I managed all right, sir," said William, cheerfully.

"Snow deep on the road?"

"Not so deep as I fancied 'twould be. All drifted and blown up to one side, like. I never seen such a thing. Drift must have been feet deep this morning. What must it be now, I wonder? Something like the arctic regions, I should think, sir!"

For the first time for hours and hours, a ray of hope flashed across me. William had walked that lonely road this morning, and noticed nothing except the drifted snow! I remembered how I had placed the dead man in the little hollow at the bottom of the bank. Could it be that the kindly, merciful snow, which I have already described as beginning to form in a winding-sheet, had hidden and buried him? That a pure white, shapeless heap, which told no tales, concealed for a while the dark deed from the world? Oh that Philippa were well enough to leave this place to-morrow! We might fly and leave no trace behind us. She might never know what she had done in her madness. The fearful secret would be mine alone. A burden it would be, but one which I might easily find strength enough to bear. Bear it! I could bear it, and be happy; for something told me that, could I but save her from the peril which menaced her, Philippa and I would part no more in this

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world until death, the only conqueror of such love as mine, swept us asunder.

Once more I looked out into the night. Still the snow-flakes whirled down. Oh, brave, kind snow! Fall, fall, fall! Pile the masses on the dead wretch. Hide him deep in your bosom. Fall for weeks, for months, forever! Save my love and me!

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CHAPTER VI.

THE SECRET KEPT.

IT is needless to say that when I awoke the next morning my first thought was of Philippa: but my first action was to go to my window and look at the skies. My heart sank within me as I saw that the snow had ceased falling, and the wintry sun was shining. I threw up the sash; the cold air cut me like a knife. I gathered up a handful of snow from the window-sill. It crumbled in my fingers like tooth-powder. I guessed at once that a hard black frost had succeeded the snow. I ran downstairs and glanced at my thermometer outside my sitting-room window. It registered twelve degrees of frost. My spirits rose; I felt that Philippa would be saved. The wind was due east: so long as it stayed there the frost would last, and that white tomb on the roadside hide the secret of the dreadful night.

I found, moreover, that Philippa's condition was all that could, under the circumstances, be hoped for. Since she had awakened from that long sleep into which the opiate had plunged her, there had been no recurrence of the delusions; no symptoms which gave me any alarm. She was, of course, weak in body, but quite quiet and collected. She spoke but little, and the few words which she did speak had no bearing on forbidden or disturbing subjects.

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Day after day went by, and still the brave black frost held the world in its iron grip, and kept the secret of the night. Morning after morning I woke to find the wind still blowing from the east, the skies clear and showing every evidence of a long spell of hard weather. A presentiment that we should be saved was now firmly established in my mind. The heavens themselves seemed to be shielding us and working for us.

I have not given the year in which these things occurred; but many who can remember that mighty fall of snow, and the time which the frost kept it on the earth, will be able to fix the date. Since that year there has been no weather like it.

Day by day Philippa grew better and stronger. I spare you, as I promised to, all description which is not absolutely necessary of my treatment of my patient, and all technical summary of the case; but before many days had gone by I knew that, as I hoped, I had to deal with one of those rare instances in which the balance of the mind is restored by forced sleep, and the complete restoration of health is but a matter of time and care.

As soon as it became a certainty that all danger to life or reason was at an end, I began to consider what course to adopt. The moment she was well enough to risk the journey, or even, if a thaw set in, before then, Philippa must fly from the scene of the tragedy in which she had played so terrible, yet morally irresponsible, a part. We must put lands and seas between ourselves and the fatal spot. But how to persuade her that such flight was absolutely necessary? Brother and sister as we now termed ourselves, would she ever consent to accompany me abroad? Had I the right to put the woman I loved in such an equivocal position?

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No! a thousand times no! And yet I knew there was no safety for her in England; and with whom could she leave England save with me?

I dared not urge upon her my true reason for flight. It was my greatest hope that the events of that night had left her mind when the madness left her, never to be recalled. And now time was pressing; ten days had passed by. The glorious frost still kept our counsel, but it could not last forever. The time must come when the white heaps of snow would melt and vanish away, and then Sir Mervyn Ferrand's cold dead face would appear, and tell the tale of his death to the first passer-by.

I had scarcely quitted the house since that night. Yet one day a kind of morbid fascination had led me to walk along the road toward Roding, and to halt at what I judged to be the spot where I laid the dead man by the side of the road. I fancied I could single out the very drift under which that awful thing lay, and a dreary temptation to probe the white heap with my stick and make sure assailed me. I resisted it, and turned away from the spot.

There was a certain amount of traffic on the road. By now the snow had been beaten down by cart-wheels and people's feet, so that it was quite possible to walk from one place to another. As I reached the house from which Philippa fled to seek refuge with me, I encountered Mrs. Wilson. I was going to pass without any sign of recognition, but she stopped me.

"I thought you were going to take your sister away?" she said.

"Lady Ferrand was unfortunately taken very ill when she left you. She is now hardly well enough to be removed."

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"Has she heard from Sir Mervyn?" asked Mrs. Wilson, abruptly.

"Not to my knowledge," I replied.

"It is strange. You know, I suppose, that he was expected at my house that night?"

"Certainly I do. It was for that reason my sister left you."

Mrs. Wilson looked at me thoughtfully. "She will not meet him again?"

"Never," I said, thinking as I spoke that my words bore a meaning only known to myself.

"Does she hate him?" she asked, suddenly.

"She has been cruelly wronged," I said, evasively.

She laid her hand on my arm. "Listen," she said. "If I thought she hated him, I would see her before she leaves, and tell her something. If I thought he hated her, I would tell him. I will wait and see."

She turned away and walked on, leaving me to make the best of her enigmatical words. She was evidently a strange woman, and I felt more sure than ever was in some way mixed up with Sir Mervyn Ferrand's early life. I had a great mind to follow her and demand an explanation, but caution told me that the less I said to her the better. It was from this woman's knowledge of the relationship between Philippa and the dead man that, when the secret of the night was laid bare, the greatest danger must arise.

After walking a few paces, Mrs. Wilson turned and came back to me. "Give me an address," she said; "I may want to write to you."

I hesitated; then I told her that any letters sent to my bankers in London would reach me sooner or later. It

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was too soon to excite suspicion by concealment of one's movements.

It was after I had gazed at that white tomb by the roadside that my impatience to remove Philippa grew fiercer and fiercer. Moreover, I had at last made up my mind what to do with my precious charge. As soon as she was well enough to bear the journey, I resolved to take her to London, and place her in the hands of one of the truest, noblest, tenderest women in the world, my mother.

She was in London, waiting for me to join her. I had written, telling her that the serious illness of a friend prevented me from leaving my home for some days. Now I resolved to go to her and tell her all Philippa's sad tale—all save the one dark chapter of which she herself, I hoped, knew nothing. I would take her to my mother. I would tell my mother how I loved her; I would appeal to her love for me, and ask her to take my poor stricken girl to her heart, even as she would take a daughter; and I dared to hope that, if only for my sake, my prayer would be granted.

Philippa was by now thoroughly convalescent. As I lay down my pen for a moment and think of that time, with its fears and troubles, it is a marvel to me that I could have dared to wait so long before moving her from the neighborhood. I can only attribute my lingering to the sense of fatality that all would go right, or to the professional instinct which forbade me urging a patient to do anything which might retard recovery; but the time had at last come.

Save for her quiet and subdued manner, my love was almost her old self again. Her words and manner to me were tender, affectionate, and sisterly. I need hardly say

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that during that time no word crossed my lips which I would have recalled. Love, if not the thought of it, I had laid aside until happier days dawned; for—I say it advisedly, and at risk of censure—Philippa was to me pure and innocent as on the day when first we met. If her hands were stained with the blood of Sir Mervyn Ferrand, she knew it not. Her wrongs had goaded her to madness, and her madness was responsible for the act, not she herself.

The man's name never crossed her lips. For all she spoke of him he might never have existed, or, at the most, been but a part of a forgotten dream. As soon as she was well enough to rise from her bed, and I could for hours enjoy her society, we talked of many things; but never of Sir Mervyn Ferrand and the immediate past.

But, nevertheless, there were times when her look distressed me. Now and again I found her gazing at me with anxious, troubled eyes, as if trying to read something which I was hiding from her. Once she asked me how she came to my house that night.

"Out of the whirling snow," I said as lightly as I could. "You came in a high state of fever and delirium."

"Where had I been? What had I been doing?"

"You came straight from Mrs. Wilson's, I suppose. I know no more."

Then she sighed and turned her head away; but I soon found her troubled dark eyes again fixed on my own. I could do nothing but meet their gaze bravely, and pray that my poor love might never, never be able to fill those hours which were at present a blank to her.

At last, exactly a fortnight from the fatal day, we left

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my home. I was now what is legally termed an accessory after the act, and was making every effort to save the poor girl from justice. In order to avert suspicion, I decided it was better not to shut up my house; so I left the faithful William to take care of it, and await my instructions. At present it was advisable that any inquirers should learn that I had gone to London with my sister, and that the time of our return was uncertain. By and by, if all went well, I could get rid of my cottage in an ordinary way. I, for one, should never wish to visit the place again.

Philippa acquiesced in all my arrangements. She was quite willing to accompany me to town. She trusted me with childish simplicity. "But, Basil, afterward—what afterward?" she asked.

Even in the midst of the menacing peril it was all I could do to refrain from kneeling at her feet and telling her that my love would solve the question of the future.

"I have a surprise for you in London," I said, as cheerfully as I could. "Trust yourself to me; you will not regret it."

She took my hand. "Whom else have I to trust?" she said simply. "Basil, you have been very good to me. I have made your life miserable; it is too late to atone; but I shall never forget these days."

Her eyes were full of tears. I kissed her hand reverently, and told her that when I saw the old smile back upon her lips, all I had done would be a thousand times repaid; but as I spoke I trembled at the thought of what might be in store for both of us.

We drove to Roding, and were perforce obliged to take the road which passed by Mrs. Wilson's house. Philippa half rose from her seat, and seemed to be on the

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point of asking me some question; but she changed her mind, and relapsed into silence. I felt a horrible dread lest the roadside objects and landmarks should awaken recollection, and my heart beat violently as we neared the white heap by the hedge, that heap which I believed held our secret. I felt that I grew deadly pale. I was forced to turn my head away and look out of the opposite window. My state of mind was not made easier by knowing that Philippa was gazing at me with that troubled look in her eyes. Altogether I felt that the strain was becoming too much for me, and I began to wonder if my life would ever again know a happy or secure moment.

After a long silence Philippa spoke. "Tell me, Basil, have you heard from that man?"

I shook my head.

"Where is he? He was coming that night. Did he come?"

"I suppose not. Why do you ask?"

"Basil, a kind of horrible dream haunts me. There was something I dreamed of that fearful night, something I dream of now. Tell me what it was."

The perspiration rose to my brow. "Dearest," I said, "no wonder you dream. You are well now, but that night you were quite out of your senses. Your fancies are but the remains of that delirium. Think no more of that wretch; he is probably living in Paris, after the manner of his kind. Think only that life is going to be calm and happy."

Anything to keep the knowledge of her fatal act from her! I forced myself to talk in a light, cheerful manner. I jested at the appearance of the few muffled-up country people whom we passed on the road. I pointed out the beauty of the trees on the wayside, each branch of which

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bore foliage of glistening snow. I did all I could to turn her thoughts into other channels—to drive that strange questioning look from her eyes. Right glad I felt when we were at last in the train, and the first stage of our flight an accomplished fact.

Upon reaching London, I drove straight to the hotel at which my mother was staying. It was one of those high-priced respectable private hotels in Jermyn Street. I engaged rooms for my sister and myself. I sent Philippa to her room to rest, and then went to find my mother. In another minute I was in her arms, and ere half an hour was over I had told her Philippa's story, and my love for the woman on whose behalf I besought her protection.

Yes, I had done right to trust to her. I knew her noble nature; her utter freedom from the petty trammels of society. I knew the love she bore her son. Let me here thank her once more for what she did for me that day.

She heard all my outpourings in silence. I told her all, save two things—the name of the man who had wronged my love, and the fate which had overtaken him. I told her, as I have told you, how I had loved—how I loved Philippa; how I now dared to hope that in time to come my love would be rewarded. I prayed her to take my poor girl to her heart, and by treating her as a daughter restore, if it were possible, her self-respect.

My mother heard me. Her sweet face grew a shade paler. Her lips quivered, and the tears stood in her eyes. I knew all that was passing through her mind. I knew how proud she was of me, and what great things she had

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hoped I should do in the world. She was a woman, and, woman-like, had counted upon her son's bettering himself by marriage; but, in spite of all this, I knew I was right in counting upon her aid. Once again, my sweet mother, I thank you.

She rose. "Let me see the woman you love. Where is she? I will go to her."

"She is here, in this house. Ah, mother, I knew you would do this for me."

She kissed my forehead. "Bring her to me," she said.

I went out, and sent word to Philippa that I wanted her. She soon came to me. She had removed the stains of travel, and, although pale, looked the perfection of graceful beauty. I led her to my mother's room. She stopped short as she saw it was tenanted by a lady. A quick blush crossed her cheek.

"Philippa, dearest," I said, "this is my mother. I have told her all, and she is waiting to welcome you."

Still she stood motionless, save that her head bent down and her bosom heaved. My mother came to her side, and, placing her kind arms round her, whispered some words which I neither heard nor tried to hear. Philippa broke into a storm of sobs, and for some moments wept on my mother's shoulder.

Then she raised her head and looked at me, and my heart leaped at the expression in her tearful eyes. "Basil, my brother, you are too good to me!" she ejaculated.

My mother led her to the sofa, and, with her arms still round her, sat down by her side. I left them, knowing that my love had now the truest, noblest heart to sob

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against; the quickest, most sympathetic ear to listen to the tale of her wrongs; and the softest, kindest voice to soothe and console her.

Ah! how happy I should have felt, could that one night's dark work have been undone—could that white tomb forever hold its ghastly secret!

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CHAPTER VII.

THE MELTING OF THE SNOW.

THE first stage of our flight toward safety accomplished, I sat down to once more review the situation, and to take such counsel as I could give myself. I endeavored to foreshadow the consequences of the inevitable discovery of Sir Mervyn Ferrand's death. I tried calmly to ascertain in what quarter the danger of discovery was situated, and how best to guard against or turn aside the peril.

Undoubtedly the chief person to fear was Mrs. Wilson. She alone knew that the man intended to reach Roding that night. She alone knew in what relation, or supposed relation, he stood to Philippa. The very night of his death would be fixed by the snow-storm; and I felt sure that as soon as the dead man was identified Mrs. Wilson could not fail to associate her guest's sudden departure and subsequent illness with the terrible event. The moment she revealed what she knew or suspected, suspicion must point to the right person, and pursuit must at once follow. My heart grew sick, as, think how I would, I could see no loop-hole by which to escape from this danger.

About secondary things I troubled but little. Upon calm reconsideration, I did not believe that my stolid William would for a moment jump at the right conclu-

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sion. If he were led to suspect either of us, it would be me, not Philippa; and I well knew that he was so much attached to me that, although he felt certain I had done the deed, he would feel equally certain that I had good and proper reasons for doing it, and no word to my detriment would pass his reticent lips. No, there was little to fear from William.

I had blamed myself deeply for the impulse which had urged me to hurl the fatal weapon away. Why did I not keep it and bury it fathoms deep? If that pistol were found, it would possibly furnish a clew which might be followed up, and undo everything. My only hope was that I had thrown it to some spot where it might lie for years undiscovered, until all association between it and the murder had disappeared.

To sum up briefly, I was bound to decide that the damning circumstantial evidence which could be furnished by Mrs. Wilson drove me back to my original idea. There was no chance of my poor Philippa's remaining unaccused or unsuspected of the deed she had unwittingly done; so her only hope of safety—indeed, considering all, I may also say my only hope of safety—was rapid flight. We must gain some land in which we could dwell without fear of being arrested. What land was there?

Many a one. The date of my story is before 1873, when nearly all the extradition treaties were made. At that time such treaties existed with only two foreign countries, France and the United States; so that our choice of a resting-place was not so limited as those who are flying from the clutches of the law find it to-day. However, in order to make certain, I paid a visit to a legal friend of mine, and, by quoting a supposititious case,

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managed to acquire a good deal of information respecting the dealings of one nation with another, so far as fugitives were concerned.

I found that although, with the two exceptions above named, there was no settled international law on the subject, there was a kind of unwritten substitute, which was known by the name of the Comity of Nations. Under this code of courtesy, a notorious criminal, who had sought refuge in the arms of another country, was not uncommonly, although there was no law under which he could be arrested, given up to his pursuers, by being simply driven across the frontier of the country in which he had hoped to find security. However, I gathered that this so-called comity was scarcely expected to be exercised by the most friendly state, unless the fugitive had fled almost red-handed, and so placed his guilt beyond doubt. No one exactly knew how far this obliging expulsion might be counted upon. It was generally supposed to be decided by the amount of influence or persuasion which one government exercised on the other.

This information rather upset my preconceived ideas as to the ease with which safety might be obtained; but reflection told me I had little to fear. The case against Philippa could be nothing more than one of suspicion. No one, not even I myself, had seen the deed done. A warrant would, no doubt, be issued for her arrest; but if our flight precluded its execution, I did not believe that any government would put itself out of the way to aid the English law. There was no one, save myself, who could positively swear that Sir Mervyn Ferrand had been killed by Philippa.

I learned that Spain was then, even as it is now, the land safest against English law. Perhaps the reason is that

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the grave, yet at times hot-blooded, Spaniard reckons human life at a lower value than more northerly nations. Anyway, it was to Spain that I turned my eyes; Spain that I resolved to reach without an hour's unenforced delay.

The very next day I broached the subject of foreign travel to my mother. Although so short a time had passed since they first met, I was overjoyed to see the terms upon which she and Philippa stood. The girl seemed to cling to her as to a natural protector—seemed ready to install her in the place of the mother she had lost. After all, the love of her own sex is indispensable to a woman's happiness. It did my heart good to see the two together. Philippa talked to my mother as she had never yet talked to me; and I knew that when the day came upon which I should ask for the only reward I wanted, my mother's kindness to the forsaken and shame-stricken girl would be an advocate that pleaded strongly in favor of my suit.

But could it ever be? Could we know happiness in the face of that dark night's work? Ah me! my heart sank as I thought that any day might bring the crushing blow. Let there be no delay. Let me not blame myself hereafter for any negligence or false security. Let us away from the peril.

"Mother," I said, "will you come abroad with Philippa and me?"

"Abroad, Basil! I have only just come home."

"No matter; come with us at once. Let us go to some place where there is warmth and bright sunshine. Let us go to Spain."

"Spain! why Spain? Besides, surely Philippa is not fit for a long journey!"

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"It will do her good. Her recollections of this country are but sad ones."

"Well, in a week or two I will see about it."

"No, at once. Let us start to-morrow or the next day. Mother, I ask it as a favor."

"Give me some good reason, Basil, and I will do as you wish."

"Look at me, and you will see the reason. Cannot you see that I am ill, worn out, nervous? I must have a change, and at once."

She gazed at me with solicitude. "Yes, I know you are not well; but why Spain?"

"A whim—a sick man's fancy. Perhaps because it is Philippa's father's country put it into my head. Mother, tell me, how do you like her?"

"She is the woman you love; she is very beautiful; she has been cruelly treated; she is blameless; to say more after so short an acquaintance would be exaggeration."

"You will come to Spain with me—with her?"

She kissed me and gave in to my whim. Then I sought Philippa.

"My mother is going to take us abroad," I said with a smile, which was forced, as all my smiles now were. "She will see to everything for you."

"She is kind—she is sweet," said Philippa, clasping her hands. "Basil, I am beginning to worship your mother. But why are we going abroad?"

"To get away from sad thoughts, for one thing; for another, because I feel ill."

She gave me a quick look of apprehension which brought the flush to my cheek. "Oh, let us go at once!" she cried. "Let us leave this land of ice and I will nurse

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you and make you well. Where are we going? When are we going?"

"To Spain—to-morrow or the next day."

She looked at me with the troubled gaze which I had so often noticed. "Basil," she said, "you are doing this for my sake."

"And my own, I fear."

"I threw away your love—I spoiled your life. I came to you a shamed woman. You saved me! You did not scorn me. You brought me to your mother's arms. Basil, may God requite you: I never can."

She burst into tears, and left the room hastily.

It was well I settled the matter of the foreign journey then. That afternoon the wind changed and a thaw set in—a thaw that slowly but surely drew away the thick white veil which covered the whole of England.

That night I had little sleep. I could do nothing but lie awake and picture that white tomb slowly melting away, until the white face beneath peered out of it and made the dread secret known to all. Who would be the first to discover it? Doubtless some country man or woman passing that way in the gray of the morning. I drew pictures of the discoverer's horror—the shriek of terror he or she would give. I scarcely dared to close my eyes; for I knew that if I dreamed, my dreams would take me to stand over the snowdrift, and force me to watch it melting away! It seemed to me that until Philippa was out of the range of pursuit I should not sleep again.

Faster and faster, now it had once begun, the thaw went on. Warm wind, heavy rain the next day, helped it. That tremendous fall of snow had, indeed, been the

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last effort of the winter. I dreaded what I might see in the morning's papers.

For it was the third day from that on which I spoke about going abroad; yet we were still in London. When it really came to making preparations for the projected trip, there were a thousand and one things to be done. There was the needful passport to be obtained; my mother had many purchases to make for both Philippa and herself. She was now fully contented with the prospect of a long sojourn on the continent; but she liked travelling in comfort, and objected very much to being hurried. So it was that, in spite of the pressing need for immediate flight, we were still in London.

The dangerous delay made me nervous, excitable, and ill-tempered. This state of mind was not without benefit to our cause, as my manner as well as my looks fully convinced my mother that my own health was the sole object of the journey. So, like a good creature, she set to work in thorough earnest to get everything ready for our departure.

To-morrow morning we were to start. I prayed Heaven that it might not be too late; that the next twenty-four hours might pass without what I dreaded taking place. For I knew that by now that ghastly object on the roadside must be lying with the light of day on its pale face!

With an effort I opened the morning's paper, and ran hastily up and down the columns. What cared I for politics, foreign news, or money-market intelligence? Here was the one paragraph which riveted all my attention. The white tomb had given up its secret! Read! To me those words were written in letters of fire!

"Horrible Discovery near Roding.—The melting of the snow has brought to light what to all appearances

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is a fearful crime. Yesterday afternoon a laborer walking on the highway discovered the body of a gentleman lying by the roadside. His death had been caused by a pistol-shot. It is supposed that it must have occurred on the night of the great snow-storm, and that the body has lain ever since under the snow, which had drifted to the depth of some feet. The facts that death must have been instantaneous, and that no weapon can be found near the spot, do away with the theory of suicide. Letters and papers found upon the corpse tend to show it to be that of Sir Mervyn Ferrand, Bart. The unfortunate gentleman's friends have been communicated with, and the inquest will be opened to-morrow."

For some minutes I sat like one stunned. Inevitable as it was that the discovery should be made, the shock seemed scarcely lightened by the foreknowledge; the danger seemed no less terrible. Oh, that we had started yesterday—were even to start to-day! What might not happen before to-morrow morning! My first impulse was to go to my mother and beg her to hasten our departure; but reflection showed me how unwise this course would be. I should alarm her—alarm Philippa! I could give no reason. My one longing was to keep the news from my poor love. Let her read that paragraph, and who could answer for the consequences? Looking as a medical man at her case, I knew that there was something about that night which troubled her; some dream, or semblance of dream, to which, fortunately, she could as yet give no coherence. Let her learn that Sir Mervyn Ferrand had ever since that night been lying dead where she met him, the fearful truth must come to her. No! not a word to excite her suspicion. My task was a twofold one. I had to save her not only from what I sup-

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pose I must call justice, but also from herself. It seemed to me that the latter was the hardest part of my work; but I would do it—I swore I would do it. I would keep watch and ward, to see that nothing reached her—that she heard nothing which could awaken memories of those mercifully absent hours.

I tore the paper to pieces and burned it. I think of all my dark days that one was the one I would be least willing to pass again. I trembled at every footstep on the stairs. Any man who paused for a moment outside our windows sent a cold chill over me. And in the midst of my misery I had to wear a cheerful face, and talk to Philippa and my mother about the pleasures of our projected journey! Ah! if we only reached the end of it in safety, the pleasure would not be altogether imaginary.

Once again I say, if you cannot feel with me, throw my tale aside. Heaven knows it is a sombre one! I was breaking the law; concealing what the law calls a crime; doing all I could to save the criminal. But the criminal was Philippa, and I loved her! I myself would have stood face to face with Sir Mervyn Ferrand, and have freely given my own life if I could have assured his dying like the dog he was. Why then should I blame Philippa, who had done in her temporary madness what I would have done in cold blood? Yet why trouble to extenuate? I loved her! Those words sum up everything.

The morning dawned. No fatal messenger had arrived. I glanced hastily at the papers, which, however, contained no more information about the tragedy. Shortly after ten o'clock we started to drive to Charing Cross. The rattle of wheels over the stones seemed to

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send fresh life through my veins. We were off on the road to safety.

We started in plenty of time, as I wished to call at my bankers' on the way. It was my intention to take with me a large sum in gold. Notes of any kind could be traced, but the bright sovereigns would tell no tale. I changed my check, and while doing so asked if there were any letters for me. Several persons addressed letters to me at my bankers'. The spruce cashier sent to inquire, and, with my bag of gold, passed under the brass-wire railing a letter with a woman's handwriting on the envelope. I thrust it into my pocket, to read at my leisure.

We travelled by the tidal train for Paris, *via* Folkestone and Boulogne. It was not the pleasantest weather in the world for a journey; but I wrapped my charges up warmly, and did all I could to mitigate the hardships of the voyage, undertaken ostensibly for the sake of my health. My mother, who was by now an experienced and seasoned traveller, settled herself down to the journey, although she little guessed how short the rest I meant to give her until we reached our destination. She laughingly protested against the cruelty of dragging an old woman like herself away from England just as she had returned to it; but there was that in her voice and manner which told me she would for my sake make a far greater sacrifice of comfort than this.

I thought that Philippa's spirits, like mine, rose as we left London behind us. She smiled at my sallies and feeble attempts at making merry, which, now that we were fairly on our road to safety, were not quite so forced as they had been during the last few days. She listened with interest to the pictures I drew—imaginary

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ones, of course—of the beauties of the south; and I was glad to believe that the thought of visiting what might almost be called her native land was beginning to awaken her interest. Only let me be able to show her that life could still promise a pleasant future, and the moody memories of the past months might be banished forever.

I am sure that no one who could have seen us that morning would have dreamed that out of that party of three, consisting of a comfortable, pleasant-looking English matron, a strangely beautiful girl, and myself, two were flying from the hands of justice. Our appearance was certainly such as to disarm all suspicion.

"But where are we going?" asked my mother. "I object to go wandering about without knowing where our pilgrimage is to end."

"We are going to Paris first, then to Spain—to wherever we can find the warmth and sunshine which is necessary to my existence. If we can't find them in Spain, we will cross over to Africa, and, if needful, go down to the Equator."

"Then you young people will have to go alone. I draw the line of my good-nature at Europe."

I glanced at Philippa. Her long curved lashes hid her eyes; but a tell-tale blush was on her cheek. I knew that the day was not so very distant when she would answer my appeal as I wished. I knew that, could I but sweep away the record of that one night, all might yet be well with her. Oh, that she may never recall what I alone know!

As we were nearing Folkestone I remembered the letter which had been given me at the bank. I drew it from my breast, intending to read it; but the sight of the Roding post-mark on the outside made me change

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my invention. I remembered Mrs. Wilson's half promise to send me some communication. I longed and yet I dreaded to break the seal. I felt it would be better for me to read that letter alone. Whatever might be the tenor of its contents, I was sure it had some bearing on Philippa's relations with Sir Mervyn Ferrand.

We were soon on board the steamer and under weigh. Although the Arctic rigors of the last three weeks had departed, the air on the sea was too keen to make the channel passage an enjoyable one. I persuaded my mother and Philippa to take refuge in the saloon; and then I found a quiet spot where I was able to read my letter without fear of interruption, or of betraying myself by the emotion its contents might cause. It was well I did so, for the first words blanched my cheek. The letter began abruptly, so:

"I know or guess all. I know why Sir Mervyn Ferrand did not reach my house that night. I know the reason for her strange excited state. I know why she left my home before you came to seek her. I know how he met with the death he deserved.

"Ah! she is braver than I am. She has done what years ago I swore I would do; and yet I had not the courage. I was base enough to forego revenge for the sake of the beggarly maintenance he offered me—for the sake, perhaps, of my children. I sank low enough to become his tool—to do as he bade me, even to taking under my roof the woman who thought herself his wife. Yes, she has been braver than I. But her wrongs were greater than mine; for I had but myself to blame for being in such a degraded position that he could throw me aside like an old glove. He never married me.

"Fear nothing for your sister, if she be your sister.

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Tell her my lips are sealed to the death; and for the sake of her brave act tell her this:

"Sir Mervyn Ferrand's first wife *died on the 18th of June*, 186—, three months before the day on which he married your sister. She died at Liverpool, at No. 5 Silver Street. She was buried in the cemetery, under the name of Lucy Ferrand. She has friends alive; it will be easy to prove that she was the woman whom he married. Her maiden name was King. He hated her. They parted. He gave her a sum of money on condition that she never called herself his wife. He lost sight of her. I never did. For years I hoped she would die, and that he would marry me. She died too late for the hope to be realized. I told him of her death; but I changed the date. I would not tell him where she died. Part of his object in coming to Roding that night was, to endeavor to wring the information from me. He would never have had it. No other woman should have been his wife so long as I could stop it.

"Now that he is dead, you can tell your brave sister that she may, if she likes, take the name, title, and what wealth she can claim. Fear nothing from me; I will be silent as death."

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CHAPTER VIII.

FLIGHT.

I READ the woman's letter again and again—read it with feelings in which joy and disgust were strangely mingled; but the former was the predominant sensation. In the first place, if Mrs. Wilson kept her promise of secrecy, it seemed to me that all danger of suspicion falling upon Philippa was removed. There would be no one else to make known the fact, that upon the night of Sir Mervyn's death a wronged, distracted woman left her home—a woman whose life's happiness had been clouded by the villain's treacherous act—a woman of strong passions, who in her temporary delirium might easily be turned to take such vengeance for which I, at least, held her quite unaccountable. If I could but feel sure of the silence of the one person whom I dreaded, we might even return to London, and fear nothing. I wavered. After all there is something contemptible in flight. Should I trust to Mrs. Wilson's promise, and return with my companions by the next boat from Boulogne?

No, a thousand times no! Philippa's welfare is far too precious to me to be trusted in the hands of one excitable woman—a woman, moreover, who has wrongs of her own calling for vengeance. To-morrow her mind may change, and instead of furthering our safety, she may be urging on the pursuit. Let me trust no one save myself.

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For my love's sake, I was overjoyed to hear that, supposing the woman's statement and date were correct, Philippa was the dead man's lawful wife. Not that this fact for one moment palliated the guilt of his intention, or lessened the contempt and hatred I bore toward him; not that it changed in my eyes by one iota my love's position. Married or unmarried, to me she was all that a woman could be. Though a blackguard's craft had wrought what would be her shame in the eyes of the world, though her hands were unconsciously red with a man's blood, to me she was pure as a vestal, innocent as a child.

Yet for her sake the news gladdened me. I knew that if ever the time should come when I could place proofs in her hands that she was a wife—that she could, if she chose, bear her worthless husband's name, and face the world without fear of scorn, the restoration of her self-respect would bring with it a joy which only a woman can rightly comprehend. And Philippa, with all her pride and passion, was a true woman, full of the softness and delicate dread of shame which characterizes the best of her sex.

Yet when should I be able to tell her? Whenever I did so I must also reveal the fact of her husband's being dead, and my doing so must bring the whole story of his death to her knowledge. I trembled as I thought what this might mean. Surely its dramatic surroundings must suggest something to her mind—must bring back the night and its horrors; must, in fact, tell her what she had done in her madness! Rather than risk this, I must let her continue to bear the cruel weight of what she thought her shame. My aim must be to make her believe that Sir Mervyn Ferrand is still alive, and troubling nothing

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as to what has become of the woman whom he once falsely swore to love and cherish until death. I cursed the wretch's memory as I thought of him.

The sending of Philippa to live under the charge of one of his own discarded mistresses was but another proof of the man's revolting cynicism. Mrs. Wilson's acceptance of the charge showed me to what a level a woman could sink. It told me, moreover, that in spite of her letter she was not to be trusted. A woman who could lend herself to her former lover's purposes in such a way as this must have parted with every atom of pride. It seemed to me that the woman and the man were well matched in baseness.

Still her letter lifted a load from my mind. I felt that for a while there could be no pursuit; yet I resolved to risk nothing, but hurry on with all possible speed. Only when we crossed the frontier of Spain should I sleep in peace.

All researches, with a view to obtaining evidence of the first Lady Ferrand's death, I postponed indefinitely. Some day, if all went well, I would return to England and procure the documents necessary to prove the validity of Philippa's marriage. There was no pressing hurry. As to any money which should be hers, never with my consent should she touch a penny which had belonged to the dead man.

Protracted as my meditations seem on paper, they were in reality much longer; indeed, they were not at an end when the boat steamed in Boulogne harbor. I went in search of my companions, who, I was glad to find, had borne the voyage well. We were soon in the train, and, without any event occurring worth recording, at eight o'clock stood on the Gare du Nord, Paris.

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We drove through the brightly lit streets to the Hotel du Louvre. The stains of travel washed away, my mother gave a sigh of satisfaction as she seated herself at the dinner-table. Like a sensible woman, she was no despiser of the good things of this life. There were other late diners in the great coffee-room, and many a head was turned to look at the beautiful girl who sat on my right hand; for every day which brought her new health and strength, brought also to my love an instalment of her former rich beauty. In a very short time she would be to all appearances the Philippa of old.

"How long shall we stay in Paris, Basil?" asked my mother.

"It is now half-past nine; our train starts at 8.45 in the morning. Calculate the time."

"Oh, nonsense! It is years since I have been in Paris. I want to look at the shops. So does Philippa, I am sure."

"My dear mother, the man, much more the woman, who lingers in Paris is lost. If you are going elsewhere, the only way is to go straight through, or else you get no further. I have proved this, and mean to run no risk."

"But remember we are only weak women. This poor child is far from strong."

She smiled at Philippa, whose eyes thanked her for the affectionate appellation.

"Don't be merciless, Basil," she continued; "give us at least one day."

"Not one. I am just going to look after a courier, so that you may travel in all possible comfort."

My mother seemed almost annoyed, and again said I was merciless. What would she have said had she known

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that, unless I had received that letter, instead of going to our present comfortable quarters, we should have driven to the Orleans Railway, and taken the first train to the south? How little she knew—how little, I trusted, Philippa knew—from what we were flying!

I felt I must give my mother some reason for my haste; so, before going in quest of my courier, I took her aside.

"It is not well for Philippa to stay in Paris," I said. "Some one whom she ought not to meet was here a short time ago."

I blamed myself for the deception; but what could I do? Alas! it seemed to me that my life, which once was fearlessly open to the inspection of all, was now full of little else save deceptions. Should I ever again be my true self?

My mother raised no further objection. I found a courier—a bearded gentleman of commanding presence, who spoke every European language with impartial imperfection. I gave him instructions to see to everything the next morning; to collect our luggage, save the small quantity we carried with us, and to register it through to Burgos. I had no particular reason for choosing Burgos, but it seemed a convenient place at which to take our first thorough rest.

The next day's journey was a dull, dreary, wearisome affair. My companions had not shaken off the fatigue of the previous day, and now that I felt Philippa's safety was, comparatively speaking, assured, a reaction set in with me. No wonder! I shudder now as I think of the strain to which both body and mind had been subjected during the last fortnight. I was moody and listless. The air was full of fog and mist. The so-called express

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train pounded along after the well-known style of French railways. Orleans, Blois, Tours, Poictiers, Angoulême, Coutras, and other stations passed me as one in a dream. The dull day crept on until dark evening was upon us, and we were all thoroughly glad when our day's journey ended at Bordeaux.

My mother, who was rather great at guide-books, had beguiled part of the journey by a Murray, which somehow made its appearance from her travelling-bag. As she knew we were to sleep at Bordeaux she had been laying down the law as to what we were to look at. We were to see the curious high wooden fifteenth-century houses of the old town; the cathedral, with its fine towers; the very old churches of St. Croix and St. Seurin, and a variety of other interesting objects. It needed all the assurance I possessed, all the invalid's querulousness and insistance I could assume, to induce her to consent to resume our journey the first thing in the morning. Even Philippa pleaded for delay, and gave me to understand that she thought I was using my mother unfairly. But I was firm. If I could I would have hurried on by the midnight train. Anyway, now that we were within a few hours' journey of the frontier and of safety, I would leave no more than I could help to chance.

So, in the early morning, I got my party together and before it was light led them to the train. I believe that by now my mother looked upon me as rather out of my senses. She frankly owned she could not see the necessity for making such a toil out of what might be a pleasure. She little knew that nothing could have made that journey a pleasure to me; that even finding Philippa's eyes now and again fixed on my face with what I almost dared to think was tender interest—that even the

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blush which crossed her cheek when I caught those glances—was not sufficient to reward me for my anxiety.

A slow, a painfully slow train. Innumerable stoppages. A country which under the circumstances would have given me no interest even if we had been in summer instead of winter; and then, after nearly five hours' slow travelling, Bayonne at last. Bayonne, with its strong fortifications. Bayonne, with the welcome Pyrenees towering above it. In less than two hours we should be in Spain.

A curious dread seized me—a presentiment so strong that ever since then I have lost faith in presentiments. Something seemed to tell me that all my efforts had been in vain; that at the frontier there would be certain intelligence received which would lead to our arrest; that Philippa, with one foot, as it were, in the land of refuge, would be seized and carried back to face the horrors and the shame of a trial for murder. It was, as events showed, an absurd fancy, and only the increasing tension of my nerves can account for the hold it gained upon me.

I grew so pale, trembled so in every limb, that my companions were thoroughly alarmed. We had brandy with us, which was duly administered to me. After awhile I recovered, and although the fear was still with me, sat with the stoicism of an Indian at the stake, awaiting what might happen at the frontier. I had done all I could. If, at the last moment, disaster overtook us, I had at least striven by every means within my power to avert it.

We have passed Biarritz, the merry bright watering-place. We have passed Hendaye, the French frontier station. We leave the towering Pyrenees on our left. We are at Irun, where all baggage must be jealously

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scrutinized. We are in Spain! Nobody has troubled us. No suspicious-looking stranger has watched us. The stoppage has been long, for the custom-house officers are annoyingly particular in the discharge of their duty; but our noble-looking courier has saved us all personal trouble. He has done us yeoman's service. At last we are in another train, a train which runs on a line of another gauge. The very time of day has changed. We have lost or gained—I forget which—some twenty minutes. We now count by Madrid time. We are fairly on Spanish ground, and I have saved my love. Saved her from others—now to save her from herself. Never, never shall she know the secret of that dark night. We will speed away to the south—to the sun; the color; the brightness; the flowers. All shall be forgotten. The dark remembrance shall be swept from my mind. I will call it a dream. I will win Philippa's love—the love that I dare to believe is already almost mine. We will live forever in bright, sunny, glowing lands. Who cares for dull, dark, dismal England? Have we not youth, wealth, and oh, blessed word! love? Before my love and me lie years and years of sweetness and joy. Shake off black gloom and be merry, Basil North. You have conquered fate!

We have passed St. Sebastian. The sluggish train is wearily winding up the valley of the Urumea. We are in wild and glorious scenery. The railway is carried at a great elevation, from which we get now and again peeps of far-away valleys. Yes, I could now find time to admire the wonderful scenery which lasted until we passed Miranda.

My mood changed with the country. I laughed; I jested. Each of the many stations at which we stopped

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furnished materials for my new-born meriment. I laughed at the solemn-looking Spanish railway officials, and drew pictures of the doleful fate of imaginary nobly-born hidalgos whom poverty forced to descend to such employment. I grumbled not at the slowness of the train, although an ordinary traveller might well, when on a Spanish line, sigh for the comparatively lightning speed of the much-maligned French trains. Time was nothing to me now. Was there not a lifetime stretching before me—and Philippa? My gayety was contagious. My mother laughed until the tears came, and Philippa smiled as I had not seen her smile since we picked up under such sad circumstances that long-dropped thread of friendship.

Those who have travelled in Spain will scarcely credit me when I say we had the compartment to ourselves. We were troubled by no cloaked Spaniard who, as is the wont of his kind, insisted upon smoking like a furnace and keeping both windows shut. Our noble courier had been given his instructions. His arguments were venal, and had I troubled about money I should have found them costly. But they carried the point, and no one intruded on our privacy.

The hours went by. My mother slept, or pretended to sleep. I seated myself near Philippa, and whispered words of thinly-veiled love. She answered them not—I expected no answer—but her eyes were downcast and her cheek was blushing. She sighed. A sad smile played around her sweet mouth; a smile that spoke of a world of regret. That sigh, that smile, told me that she understood me, but told me also that, ah! it could never be. The past never forgives! But all the same she let her hand rest in mine; and although, considering what

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had happened, I scarcely dare to say so, for once, for many, many months, I was all but happy.

For me that journey ended only too soon. At night we reached Burgos, the capital of the old Castilian kingdom, and I laid my head on my pillow and enjoyed sleep such as I had not known since the night before that one, when Philippa, with the snow-flakes falling around her, stood outside the window of my cottage and gave me something to live for—something to hope for!

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CHAPTER IX.

SAFE—AND LOVED.

NOW that we are safe in Spain, now that Philippa's arrest is a matter of impossibility, and her expulsion from a country so lax in its observance of international obligations highly improbable, when her guilt can at the utmost be only suspected, if indeed suspicion ever points to her, I may pass rapidly over the events of the next two months; the more so as my record of them would differ very little from the description of an ordinary tour in Spain. To me, after the feverish anxiety, the horrible dread as to what any hour might bring forth, which had characterized our flight from England, it seemed something very much like bathos my dropping at once into the position of the every-day tourist taking a couple of ladies on a round of travel; but for the time I was outwardly neither more nor less.

From Burgos we went to Valladolid; from Valladolid to Madrid—Madrid, the high-perched city, with its arid, uninteresting surroundings and abominable climate. Not long did we linger here. Bad and trying as the English winter may be, the cold of Madrid is a poor exchange for it. I had almost thrown aside the assumed character of an invalid; but I felt it would be the height of inconsistency, after forcing my companions to accompany me in the search of warmth, to make any stay in the Spanish capital. Right glad I was to leave it, and turn my face

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southward. Philippa was by now in apparently good health, both bodily and mental; but while at Madrid I trembled for her, as I should tremble for any one I loved who made that city a resting-place—a city swept from end to end by crafty, treacherous, icy winds blowing straight from the Guadarrama mountains; insidious blasts in which lurk the seeds of consumption and death.

So at our leisure we went southward, halting at such places and seeing such sights as we thought fit; lingering here and there just so long as it suited us; travelling by easy stages, and in such comfort as we could command. At Malaga we spent weeks, revelling in the balmy, delicious air; at Granada we were days and days before we could tear ourselves from the interesting, absorbing glories of the departed Moor. We were in a new world —a world which I had always longed to see. At last—it was just at the end of April, when the land was full of roses, when vegetation was breaking into that rich luxuriance unknown in the northern lands—we turned our steps to the city which I had in my own mind fixed upon as the end of our wanderings, the half Spanish, half Moorish, but wholly beautiful city of Seville; brilliant, romantic Seville, with its flower-bedecked houses, its groves of orange and olive trees, its luxuriant gardens, its crooked narrow streets, its Moorish walls, its numerous towers, all of which sink into insignificance under the shadow of the lofty Giralda. All I wanted seemed to be here.

Here was everything for the sake of seeking which I had professed to leave foggy England—sun, warmth, color, brightness. Here I thought, if in any place in the world, will the one I love forget what she knows of the cruel past. Here, it may be, our new life shall begin.

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Glorious, wonderful Seville! The magic charm of the place fell on my companions as it fell upon me, as indeed it falls upon all who visit it. By common consent we arranged to stay our course for an indefinite time. Perhaps by now we all thought that we had endured enough of hotel life, and wanted some place which might bear the name of home; so, although such things are not very easy to find, I hired a furnished house. Such a house!

From the narrow street—the need of shade makes narrow streets indispensable to Seville—pass through a light open-work iron gate into a spacious white marble-lined courtyard, or, as the Spaniards call it, *patio;* a courtyard open to the sky, save for the gayly-colored awning which is sometimes spread over it; a space fragrant to the four corners with the perfume of orange and other sweet-smelling blossoms, bright with glowing oleanders, and musical with the murmur of fountains. Around the walls statues, some of the fair works of art, paintings and mirrors. Every sitting-room in the house opening on to this cool central fairyland—a fairyland which, for many months of the year, is almost the only part of the house used in their waking hours by the Sevillaños. Add to this a garden, not large but exquisite, full of the rarest and choicest blooms, and if you are not hopelessly bigoted, and enamored of English fogs, you must long for such a home in courtly, beautiful Seville!

With such surroundings—almost those of a Sybarite—who can blame me for being lulled into security, if not forgetfulness, and for telling myself that my troubles were nearly at an end? Who can wonder at the castles I built as hour after hour I lounged in the *patio*, with its fragrant, soothing atmosphere, and gazed at Philippa's

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beautiful face, and now and again meeting her dark eyes, and sometimes surprising in those thoughtful depths a look which thrilled my heart—a look which I told myself was one of love?

True, that often and often in my sleep I saw the white, dead face, with the snow-heap forming over it. True, that often and often Philippa's wild cry, "The wages of sin—on, on, on!" rang through my dreams, and I awoke trembling in every limb; but in the day-time, in the midst of the sweet shaded repose, I could almost banish every memory, every thought which strove to lead me back to grief and horror.

The days, each one sweeter than its forerunner, passed by. Each day was passed with Philippa. We wandered for hours through the marvellous gardens of the Alcazar; we drove under the shading trees of Las Delicias; we made excursions to Italica and other places, which the guide-book tells you every visitor to Seville should see; but I think we found in the ordinary sights, which were at our very door, as much pleasure as in any of the stock shows. We loved to watch the people. We delighted in the picturesque, ragged-looking, black-eyed Andalusian boy-rascals who played and romped at every street-corner. We noted the exquisitely graceful figures of the Sevillañas; I, moreover, noted that the most graceful of these figures could not be compared to Philippa's own. We strolled up the awning-roofed Calle de las Sierpes, and laughed at the curious windowless little shops. Everything was so strange, so bright, so teeming with old-world tradition, so full of intense interest, that no wonder I could for the time send painful memories to the background.

And Philippa? Although there were times when her

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face grew sad with sad remembrances; although at times her eyes sought mine with that troubled, inquiring look; although I trembled as to what might be the question which I seemed to see her lips about to form; I did not, could not believe she was entirely unhappy. The smile —a quiet, thoughtful one, yet a smile—was oftener seen on her face. It came now of its own accord. More and more certain I grew that, if nothing recalled the past, or I should say, if nothing filled the blank, so mercifully left, of that one night, the hour was not far distant when my love would call herself happy. Oh, to keep that fatal knowledge from her forever!

Such was my life. So, in calm, peace, all but happiness, the days passed by, until the hour came when for the third time I dared to tell Philippa that I loved her—to tell her so with the certainty of hearing her re-echo my words. Yes, certainty. Had I not for many days seen her eyes grow brighter, the grave, thoughtful look leave her face, her whole manner change when I drew near? Such signs as these told me that the crowning moment of my life was at hand.

Here for one moment I pause. I scorn to excuse myself for wishing to marry a woman who had been, or supposed herself to have been, the innocent victim of a scoundrelly man of the world. I have nothing in common with those who think such an excuse is needed. Mrs. Wilson's statement that the marriage was valid might be true or false. It gave me the impression that it was true, and I believed that Philippa could lay claim to bear the man's accursed name. But whether she was Lady Ferrand, or a trusting woman betrayed, for my own sake I cared little. She was Philippa!

As to my intention of marrying, my one wish to

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marry, a woman who, in her temporary and fully-accounted-for delirium, had killed the man who so cruelly wronged her, I have but this to say. My tale, although I give it to the world, is not written for the purpose of fiction. It is the story of myself—a story which seemed to me worth telling—of a man who loved one woman passionately, blindly, and without consideration. Such was my great love for Philippa that I feel no shame in telling the truth, and saying that had I seen her, in full possession of her senses, level that pistol and shoot her betrayer through his black heart, I should have held that only justice had been done. I should have regretted the act, but, nevertheless, I would have pleaded for her love as fervently and reverently as I now was about to plead for it.

Once more I say, if you condemn me, throw the book aside.

Philippa, with her eyes half closed, was, as was usual at that hour, sitting in the *patio*. In her hand she held a sprig of orange blossom, and ever and anon inhaled its delicious perfume; an action, by the bye, scarcely needful, as the whole air was redolent of the fragrance thrown from the great tree in the centre of the marble space. She was, or fancied she was, alone, as some little time before I had left the court to obtain a fresh supply of cigarettes; and my mother, who could never quite adapt herself to the semi-open-air life, was taking a siesta in the drawing-room. As I saw Philippa in all her glowing beauty, the white marble against which she leaned making as it were a suitable foil to the warm color of her cheek—the long, curved, black, downcast lashes—the bosom rising and falling gently—like an inspiration the thought came to me that in a minute my fate would be

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decided. Heavens! how could I have waited so long to hear the words which I knew she would say?

I crept noiselessly to her side. I passed my arm round her waist and drew her to me. I whispered words of passionate love in her ear—words, the confidence of which startled me; but then this time I knew that my love of years was to be rewarded.

She did not shrink away; she did not struggle to free herself, but she trembled like a leaf in my embrace. She sighed deeply, even hopelessly, and I saw the tears welling in her dark eyes. Closer and firmer I held her, and kissed her cheek again and again. Had that moment been my last I should have said I had not lived in vain.

"Philippa," I whispered, "my queen, my love, tell me you love me at last."

She was silent. The tears broke from her eyes and ran down her cheeks. I kissed the signs of sorrow away.

"Dearest," I said, "it is answer enough that you suffer these kisses, but I have waited so long—been so unhappy; look at me and satisfy me; let me hear you say, 'I love you!'"

She turned her tearful eyes to mine, but not for long. She cast her looks upon the ground and was still silent. Yet she lay unresisting in my arms. That, after all, was the true answer.

But I must have it from her lips. "Tell me, dearest—tell me once," I prayed.

Her lips quivered; her bosom rose and fell. The blush spread from her cheek and stole down her white neck.

"Yes," she murmured, "now that it is too late, I love you."

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I laughed a wild laugh. I clasped Philippa to my breast.

"Too late!" I cried. "We may have fifty years of happiness."

"It is too late," she answered. "For your sake I have told you that I love you, Basil. My love, I will kiss you once—then loose me, and let us say farewell."

"When death closes the eyes of one of us we will say farewell—not until then," I said, as my lips met hers in a long and rapturous kiss.

Then with a sigh she gently but firmly freed herself from my arms. She rose, we stood on the marble floor, face to face, gazing in each other's eyes.

"Basil," she said softly, "all this must be forgotten Say farewell; to-morrow we must part."

"Dearest, our lives henceforth are one."

"It cannot be. Spare me, Basil! You have been kind to me. It cannot be."

"Why? Tell me why."

"Why! need you ask? You bear an honored and respected name; and I, you know what I am—a shamed woman."

"A wronged woman, it may be, not a shamed one."

"Ah! Basil, in this world, when a woman is concerned, wronged and shamed mean the same thing. You have been as a brother to me. I came to you in my trouble; you saved my life—my reason. Be kinder still, and spare me the pain of paining you."

By look, by word, by gesture, she seemed to beseech me. Oh, how I longed to tell her that I firmly believed she was the dead man's wife! I had much difficulty in checking the words which were forming on my lips. But I dared not speak. Telling her that the marriage was a

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valid one meant that I must tell her of her husband's death, and, it might be, how he died.

"Philippa," I said, "the whole happiness of my life, my every desire, is centred upon making you my wife. Think, dearest, how when I had no right to demand this gift my life was made desolate; think what it will be when I know you love me and yet refuse to be mine! Have I been true to you, Philippa?"

"Heaven knows you have."

"Then why, now that you love me, refuse me my reward?"

"Oh, spare me!—I cannot, I will not give it. Basil, dear Basil, why with your talents should you marry the cast-off—mistress—of Sir Mervyn Ferrand? Why should you blush to show your wife to the world?"

"Blush! The world! What is my world save you? You are all to me, sweetest. You love me—what more do I want? Before this time next week we will be married."

"Never, never! I will not wrong the man I love. Basil, farewell forever!"

She clasped her hands and fled wildly across the court. I caught her at the door, which she had reached and half opened. "Promise me one thing," I said; "promise you will wait here until my return. I shall not be five minutes. It is not much to ask, Philippa."

Philippa bent her head as in assent. I passed through the door, and in a few minutes returned to the *patio*, accompanied by my mother, who glanced from Philippa to me in a surprised way.

"What is the matter?" she asked, with her cheerful smile. "Have you two young people been quarrelling?"

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Philippa made no answer. She stood with her fingers interlaced; her eyes cast on the ground.

"Mother," I said, "I have to-day asked Philippa to be my wife. I have told her that all my happiness depends upon her consent to this. I have loved her for years; and at last she loves me. Yes, she loves me."

My mother gave a little cry of pleasure, and stepped forward. I checked her.

"I love her, and she loves me," I continued. "But she refuses to marry me. And why? Because she fears to bring shame on an honorable name. You know her story; you are my mother. You, of all people in the world, should be the most jealous as to the honor of my name. You should know whom you would choose for my wife. Tell her—"

I said no more. My mother advanced with outstretched arms, and in a moment my poor girl was weeping in her embrace, while words which I could not hear, but whose purport I could well guess, were being whispered to her. I had indeed been right in trusting to my mother's noble nature.

"Leave us for a little while, Basil," she said, as Philippa still sobbed upon her shoulder. "Come back in a quarter of an hour's time."

I turned away, went past the screen which is sometimes put up to insure privacy, out of the iron gate, into the narrow street. I watched the lounging, dignified-looking men and the dark-eyed women who went by; I looked at the merry urchins at play; and after what seemed an interminable quarter of an hour, returned to learn how my gentle counsel had succeeded with my suit.

My mother and Philippa were sitting with their arms

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around each other. Philippa, as I entered the *patio*, raised her eyes to mine with a look of shy happiness. My mother rose and took the girl by the hand.

"Basil," she said, "I have at last been able to persuade her that you and I, at least, rise above the conventionalities of what is called the world. I have told her that, knowing all I know, I see nothing to prevent her from being your wife. I have told her that simply for her own sweet sake I would rather see you marry her than any woman in the world. And, Basil, I fancy I have made her believe me."

With her soft eyes full of maternal love, my mother kissed me and left the court. I opened my arms to close them round the fairest woman in the world; and all the earth seemed bright and glorious to me. My great love had conquered!

And yet, even in that moment of bliss, my thoughts involuntarily flew away to a snow-heaped road in England—to a white drift, under which for days and days a ghastly object had once been lying. A dream! a dream! It must have been a fearful dream. Forget it, Basil North, and be happy in the happiness you have at last won!

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CHAPTER X.

THE SWORD FALLS.

ONCE conquered—once convinced that the obstacles which her solicitude for my welfare raised against my wish were not insuperable—Philippa offered no further resistance; while as for me, every day that might be counted before I called her my wife seemed a day spoiled, if not entirely wasted. With my mother's arguments to back my own fervent persuasion, I had no difficulty in winning Philippa's consent to our marriage taking place as soon as the needful formalities could be complied with. And yet, although the day was fixed it was at my instance changed, and the ceremony postponed for a while.

My reason for deferring my crowning happiness was this. Knowing all that I knew, the question arose, under what name was Philippa to be married? Under her own maiden name; under the false name which for some time Sir Mervyn Ferrand, for reasons best known to himself, had made her assume; or under that name which, supposing Mrs. Wilson had spoken the truth, she was legally entitled to bear? So anxious, so resolved was I that there should be no shadow of doubt as to the validity of her second and happier marriage, that after due consideration I determined to sacrifice my own inclinations, and postpone our wedding long enough to

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give me time to pay a flying visit to England, where I could do my best to obtain such evidence as would show that Philippa was the dead man's widow.

I made the excuse that I found many matters of business connected with my property must be attended to before I could be married. I travelled to England—to Liverpool—as fast as I could. I stayed there for a week, and during that time made full researches into the life and death of a woman who, as Mrs. Wilson said, had died on a certain date, and been buried under the name of Lucy Ferrand.

The information I acquired as to her antecedents is of no consequence to my story. Whatever her faults may have been, her history was a sad one; indeed it seemed to me that the history of any woman who had been cursed by Sir Mervyn Ferrand's love was a sad one. However, the result of my investigations was, in short, this: Ferrand had married the woman many years ago. They had parted by mutual consent. With his cynical carelessness, he had troubled no more about her; and, stranger still, she had not troubled him. She died on the date given by my informant. The question of identity could be easily settled; so that if ever Philippa chose to claim the rights appertaining to Sir Mervyn Ferrand's widow, she would have no difficulty in making that claim good. But I trusted that years might pass before she learned that the man was dead.

I made my presence in England known to no one; in fact, I felt that in returning to my native country I ran a certain amount of risk. For all I knew to the contrary, there might be a warrant out against me. If suspicion as to the author of that night's work had in any way been directed to Philippa, I, the partner of her

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flight, could not hope to escape free. However, I comforted myself by thinking that if danger menaced us I should have heard something about it, as after our first hurried start I had made no attempt to conceal our whereabouts. It would have been useless. My mother had friends in England, with whom she exchanged letters. I had an agent and lawyers, with whom, if only for financial reasons, I was bound to correspond. I had been obliged to write to my stolid William, and instruct him to get rid of the cottage as best he could, and to look out for a fresh place for himself. But all the same I did not care to let it be known that I was now in England.

While engaged upon raking up evidence on Philippa's behalf, I did not neglect to make such inquiries as I could respecting the event which had happened that night near Roding. I found that, so far as the general public knew, the crime was still veiled in mystery. No one had been arrested; no one had been accused; no reason for the deed had been discovered, and as yet suspicion pointed to no one. Indeed, in spite of the hundred pounds reward offered by Government, it seemed that Sir Mervyn Ferrand's murder was relegated to swell the list of undiscovered crimes. By this I knew that Mrs. Wilson had kept her promise of silence; and now that months had gone by, now that public attention had been turned from the thrilling affair, now that Philippa seemed as far or farther than ever from giving any token which suggested the awakening of recollection of what her wrong, her frenzy, had prompted her hand to do unknowingly, I dared to hope that any chance which remained of a revelation of the truth was reduced to a minimum. These results of my investigations and inquiries gave me immense relief, and my heart was all

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but gay as, armed with the proofs of the first Lady Ferrand's death, I hurried back to Seville, Philippa, and the happiness which I vowed should be mine.

We were married. Philippa and I were married! Married; and a few months ago I sat lonely, miserable, and heart-broken, deeming that the one I loved was lost to me forever! What matters the things which have filled those months, and made them the most painful of my life? To-day we are man and wife, joined together till death us do part!

I said no word as to the result of my inquiries in Liverpool. I had no difficulty in persuading Philippa, who in some things was as simple and trusting as a child, that it was necessary, or at least advisable, she should be married under the name which her first certificate of marriage affected to bestow upon her. She signed her name for the last, it may, for aught I know, have also been the first time, as Philippa Ferrand; and I noticed that she shuddered as she formed the letters.

Although my bride was by birth half a Spaniard, and although I had by now in many ways conformed to the Spanish mode of life, we were still English enough to look upon going away somewhere for a honeymoon as indispensable. It would be but a short trip; and as my mother in our absence would be left at Seville alone, or with servants only, we did not care to go very far away. It so happened that, although so close to Cadiz, we had not yet paid that town a visit, and thought the present a capital opportunity for so doing.

To Cadiz we went, and stayed several days at the Hotel de Paris. We liked the white-walled town, rising and shining above the dark-blue sea, like, as I have somewhere seen it described, a white pearl in a crown of sapphires;

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or, as the Gaditanos call it, *tazita de plata*, a silver cup. We liked the rows of tall terrace-topped houses. We liked the movement and bustle on the quays and in the port. We liked the walks on the broad granite ramparts, and the lovely views of the busy bay and country beyond it; but all the same we agreed that Cadiz bore no comparison to our beautiful Seville, and the sooner we returned to that gay city the better.

Now that I had gained my desire, was I happy? After all that had passed, could I have been happy during those early days of our wedded life? As I look back upon them, I sit and muse, trying in vain to answer the question to my own satisfaction. Philippa loved me—she was my wife; come good, come evil, she was mine forever. In so much I was happy, thrice happy. Could I have lived but for the present, my bliss would have known no alloy.

But there was the past! I could not altogether forget the path which had led to such happiness as now was mine. I could be thankful that I alone knew all the horrors and dangers with which that path was studded. I alone knew the secret of that one night. Although I could keep it forever, would it be always a secret?

Yes, and there was the future. Behind the happiness which was mine at present lurked a dread as to what the future had in store for me—for us. It was a dread which day by day grew stronger. The greater my happiness, the more dreadful the thought of its being wrecked. The feeling that my house of joy was built upon sand was always obtruding on my most blissful hours, and not, I knew, without good reasons.

Philippa's very avoidance of speaking of her past life lent some justification to my gloomy forebodings. Not

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once did Sir Mervyn Ferrand's name pass between my wife and me. Not once did she ask me for any further particulars concerning the events of that night upon which, in the height of her short-lived mania, she reached my cottage. True that upon becoming my wife, and beginning a new and happier stage of life, it might be but natural for her to wish to consign to oblivion the wrong, the shame, the suffering wrought by a villain's craft; yet I was so mixed up in the catastrophe that silence on the subject seemed strange. Her reticence alarmed me. I fancied it must be caused by some vague uneasiness connected with that night—some doubt which she dared not seek to set at rest. It is, I know, not unusual for women, after their recovery from that mysterious disease which had for awhile driven my poor girl distraught, to be able to recall and accurately describe the delusions which had afflicted them during those wandering hours. I myself had in one or two cases noticed this peculiarity, and the authorities which I had studied during Philippa's illness mention it as an indisputable fact. My great dread was that at some moment, perhaps when our happiness was as perfect as it could be, some simple chance, some allusion to certain events, even the bare mention of a name, might supply the missing link, and the fearful truth would be revealed to my wife.

Our return journey to Seville was made by water. Although the Guadalquiver is not a very interesting river, we thought travelling by steamer would be a pleasant change from the journeys in the hot, stuffy, slow trains, full from end to end with the odor of garlic and tobacco; so early one morning we left Cadiz, and were soon steaming up the sluggish, dull, turbid river, with the great flat stretches of swampy land on either hand.

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There were not many passengers on board the steamer. The boat itself was a wretched affair, and before an hour was over we wished we had chosen the train as a mode of transit. Mile after mile of the level deserted land through which the river flows passed by, and presented no objects of interest greater than herds of cattle or flights of aquatic birds. Save that Philippa was by my side, it was the dullest journey I ever made.

Of course there were English tourists on board; no spot is complete without them. Two of them, young men, and apparently gentlemen, had seated themselves near us; and after the usual admiring glances at my beautiful Philippa, commenced a desultory talk with each other.

From the unrestrained way in which they spoke, and from the strength of some of their unfavorable comments on the scenery, or lack of scenery, it was clear that they took us for natives, before whom they could speak without being understood. Philippa, of course, looked a thorough Spaniard, and my own face had become so tanned by the sun that I might have been of any nationality.

The young fellows chatted on, quite oblivious to the fact that two of their neighbors understood every word they spoke. For some time I listened with great amusement; then the lulling motion of the steamer, the sluggish muddy flow of the stream, the monotonous banks past which we stole, exercised a soporific effect upon me, and I began to doze and dream.

Through my dreams I heard a name, a hated name, spoken clearly and distinctly. I started and opened my eyes. Philippa's head was stretched forward as if she

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was intent upon catching some expected words spoken by another.

"Sir Mervyn Ferrand," I heard one of our fellow-voyagers repeat. "Yes, I remember him; tall, good-looking man. Where is he now? He was a bad lot."

"Surely you read or heard about it?" said his companion in a tone of surprise.

I touched my wife's arm. "Come away, Philippa," I said.

She made a motion of dissent. Again I urged her. She shook her head pettishly.

"Ah! I forgot where you have been for months," said the second tourist, laughing; "out of the pale of civilization and newspapers. Well, Ferrand was murdered—shot dead!"

"Philippa, dearest, come, I implore you," I whispered.

It was too late! The look on her face told me that nothing would now move her—nothing! She would hear the dreadful truth, told perhaps with distorted details. I groaned inwardly. The moment I had so long dreaded had come. If I dragged her away by force—if I interrupted the speakers—what good could it do? She had heard enough. She would force me to tell her the rest. I could only pray that she would not in any way associate herself with the man's death.

"Murdered! Poor fellow! Who murdered him?" I heard the first speaker say.

"No one knows. He was shot dead on a country roadside, just as that fearful snow-storm of last winter began. It seems almost incredible, but the snow drifted over him, and until it melted the crime was not discovered. In the interval the murderer had, of course, got clean away."

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"Poor devil! I never heard any good of him; but what an end!"

I was not looking at the speakers. I was noting every change in my wife's face. I saw the color fly from her cheek. I saw her lips and throat working convulsively, as though she was trying to articulate. I saw her dark brows contract as in anguish. I knew that she was clasping her hands together, as was her way when agitated. Suddenly she turned her eyes to mine, and in her eyes was a look of horror which told me that the very worst had come to pass—that the dread which had haunted me was realized! Then with a low moan she sank, white and senseless, on my shoulder.

Though in a whirl of despair, I believe that I assumed a kind of mechanical calm. I seem to remember that the two English tourists offered their assistance; that, as we bore Philippa to an extemporized couch in the shadiest and coolest place we could find, I smiled, and attributed my wife's fainting-fit to the heat of the sun, the smell of engines, or something of that kind. Little did those young men guesss what their chance words had wrought. Little could they think that in speaking of Sir Mervyn Ferrand's death they had, perhaps, wrecked the happiness of two lives. My heart was full of grief and fear, but I believe I bore myself bravely.

In spite of such restoratives as we could administer, Philippa's swoon lasted for a considerable time. I troubled little about that fact. Indeed, to me it seemed well that syncope should have supervened, and, for a time, banished the dreadful memories which had so suddenly invaded her brain. Could such a thing have been possible, I would almost have wished that her insensibility would continue until we reached Seville. But it was

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not to be so. By and by she sighed deeply, and her eyes opened. Consciousness and all its dreaded sequence was hers once more.

I spoke to her, but she made no reply. She turned her eyes from mine; she shunned my gaze; she even seemed to shrink from the touch of my hand. During the remainder of that dreary journey not one word passed her lips. She lay with her face turned to the side of the vessel, heedless of curious glances from fellow-passengers, heedless of my whispered words of love; heedless of all save her own thoughts—thoughts which led her, I trembled to picture whither.

Through all those long sultry hours while the wretched steamboat ploughed its way up the broad muddy stream I sat beside her, trying to find some way out of our sorrow. Alas! every road was stopped by the impassable obstacle of Philippa's knowledge of what she had done. For she knew it, I was certain. That look in her eyes had told me so much. The duration of her insanity had been so short that I could gather no comfort from the fact that by some merciful arrangement maniacs who recover their erring senses are troubled little by the deeds they have done in their moments of madness. I felt that in my wife's case my only hope was to endeavor by argument to bring her to my own way of thinking; that is, to consider herself unaccountable by any law, human or divine, for her actions at the time. But I doubted if her sensitive, impulsive nature could ever be induced to take this view of her act. I doubted, had she not been the woman I loved with a passionate love, if I could have quite absolved her from the crime, with the remembrance of her words, "Basil, did you ever hate a man?" still with me.

Yet, strange anomaly, I would, in fair fight of course,

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have shot that man through the heart and have gloried in the deed. But then Philippa was a woman, and had she not been the woman I loved I might have shrunk from the one who, even in her madness, was urged to take such fearful vengeance.

I smiled bitterly as I thought how a chance breath of wind had tumbled my house of cards to the ground. I smiled almost triumphantly as I told myself that, come what might—misery—shame—death—I had won and held for a week the one desire of my life. Nothing could deprive me of that memory.

Home at last! Still silent, or answering my questions by monosyllables, Philippa was brought by me to our once happy home in Seville. My mother, with arch smiles of welcome on her comely face, was at the gate of the *patio* ready to receive us. As she saw her a kind of shiver ran through my poor love's frame. She let my mother embrace and caress her without any display of reciprocal affection.

"Philippa is ill," I said, in explanation. "I will take her to her room."

I led her to the apartment which my mother had in our absence fitted up for us. It was gay and beautiful with flowers, and there were many other careful little evidences of the hearty welcome which was waiting us. Philippa noticed nothing. I closed the door and turned toward my wife.

She looked at me with those wondrous dark eyes, which seemed to search my very soul. "Basil," she said, in a low, solemn voice, "tell me—tell me the truth. What had I done that night?"

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CHAPTER XI.

SPECIAL PLEADING.

IT was over! She knew! The hope which may have buoyed my spirits, that Philippa's agitation at learning of Sir Mervyn Ferrand's death was but due to the fact that once she loved the man entirely vanished. I could see no loophole of escape, no possibility of persuading her that she was fancying horrors which had never taken place. Moreover, although I would have given my life to have saved her from the knowledge of this thing, I could not meet the eyes of her I loved, and lie to her.

I did indeed, if but for the sake of gaining time, attempt to stammer out some evasive answer; but she interrupted me before I had spoken five words.

"Why do I ask?" she echoed. "I knew it all—all—all! In dreams it has come to me—the whitened road—the dull dead face—the whirling snow! In dreams I have stood over him, and said to myself, 'He is dead!' But, Basil, my love, my husband, I thought it was but a dream. I drove it away. I said, 'It must be a dream. I hated him, and so I dreamed that I killed him.' Basil, dearest Basil, tell me, if you can, that I dreamed it!"

Her voice sank into accents of piteous entreaty. She looked at me yearningly.

"Dearest, it must have been a dream," I said.

She threw out her arms wildly. "No, no! It was

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no dream. Even now I can see myself standing in the night over that motionless form. I can feel the cold air on my cheek. I can see myself flying through the snow. Basil, I hated that man, and I killed him!"

The tears were streaming down my cheeks. I seized her hands, and strove to draw her to me. She tore herself from my grasp, and throwing herself wildly on the bed, broke into a paroxysm of sobs. As I approached her she turned her head from me.

"I killed him! killed him!" she whispered in awe-struck tones. "Oh, that fearful night! It has haunted me ever since. I knew not why. Now I know! He wronged me, and I killed him! killed him!"

I placed my arm around her neck, and my cheek against hers. As she felt my touch she started up wildly.

"No, no!" she cried. "Touch me not! Shun me! Shrink from me! Basil, do you hear? Do you understand? I have murdered a man!"

Once more she threw herself on the bed, her whole frame quivering with anguish.

"A shamed—a ruined woman!" she muttered. "A villain's forsaken toy, and now a murderess! You have chosen your wife well, Basil!"

"Sweetest, I love you," I whispered.

"Love me! How can you love me? Such love is not holy. If you love me, aid me to die, Basil! Give me something that will kill me! Why did you save my life?"

"Because I loved you then, as I love you now."

She was silent, and I hoped was growing calmer. I was but waiting for the first shock of her newly-born knowledge to pass away, in order to reason with her, and

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show her that by every moral law she was guiltless of the fearful crime. Suddenly she turned to me.

"How did I kill him?" she said, with a shudder.

"Dearest, rest. We will talk again presently."

"How did I kill him?" she repeated with vehemence.

"He was found shot through the heart," I answered reluctantly.

"Shot through his heart—his wicked heart! Shot by me! How could I have shot him? With what? Basil, tell me all, or I shall go mad! I will not have the smallest thing concealed. I will know all!"

"He was shot with a pistol."

"A pistol! a pistol! How did I come by it? Where is it?"

"I threw it away."

"You? Then you knew!"

I bowed my head. I felt that concealment was useless. She must know all.

I told her everything. I told her how she had promised to come for me; how, as she did not keep that promise, I went in search of her. I told her how she had swept past me in the snow-storm; how I had overtaken her. I repeated her wild words, and told her how the fatal weapon had fallen at my feet, and how I had, on the impulse of the moment, hurled it away into the night; how she had broken away from me, and fled down the lonely road; how, excited and terrified by her words, I had gone on to learn their meaning; how I had found the body of Sir Mervyn Ferrand; how, without thought of concealing the deed, I had laid the dead man by the roadside; how I had rushed home, and found her, Philippa, waiting for me, and in the full height of temporary insanity. I told her all this, and I swore that from the

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moment I discovered that her senses had gone astray I held her, although she had done so dreadful a deed, as innocent of crime as when she slept, a babe, on her mother's breast.

She listened to me with fixed dilated eyes. She interrupted me neither by word nor gesture; but when I had finished speaking she covered her face with her hands, and great tears trickled through her fingers. "No hope! No hope!" she cried. "Oh, Basil, I dared to hope that something you would tell me would show me it was not my hand which did this thing! My love, my own love, we have been so happy while I could persuade myself all this was a dream! We shall be happy no more, Basil!"

Although she still shrank from me, by force I drew her to me, and laid that poor head on my shoulder. I stroked the smooth black silky hair, I kissed the white forehead, and used every endearing and soothing expression that love such as mine could suggest. In vain! The moment I loosened my hold my wife fled from my side.

"Basil," she cried, "you knew it! You knew the blood of a man was on my hands! Again I say such love is not holy!"

"Dearest, again I tell you that in my eyes—if the truth were known, in the eyes of all—you are innocent as a babe."

She shook her head hopelessly, I saw that nothing at present could move her. Perhaps it was more than I had a right to expect. So for the time I gave up arguing. I begged her for my sake to retire to rest. I gave her a soothing draught. I sat by her for hours, and held her hand, until at last her eyelids fell, and, worn out by grief, she slept.

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Oh, how right I had been in choosing flight! Although a cursed chance had revealed what I fondly hoped would be forever buried in oblivion, how right I had been! Had the hands of Justice grasped my sweet wife, although she might no doubt have been found guiltless, the trial, the exposure, would have killed her. Thank heaven, she was safe, and amenable only to the tribunal of her own sensitive conscience!

When I heard her breathing grow regular, and knew that she was in a deep sleep, I pressed my lips gently to her fair cheek, and left her. I went in search of my mother, and made the best tale I could think of to account for Philippa's indisposition. I forced myself to wear a smiling face, and to listen with a show of interest to the account my mother gave me of certain difficulties which had during my absence arisen with some of the native servants. But there was nothing which could really interest me when I thought of my poor love lying there sleeping, to awake, alas! to sorrow and remorse. No wonder that, as soon as I had spent with my mother the smallest portion of time which filial duty and gratitude exacted, I flew back to Philippa's bedside.

I watched beside her until she awoke—until her splendid dark eyes unveiled themselves. I leaned over and kissed her passionately. Between sleeping and waking, while consciousness was yet in abeyance, she returned my caresses. Then came back memory and its terrors.

"Leave me," she said; "I am a murderess!"

"Once more I denied it; once more I told her she was innocent. My only hope was, that by continued argument I might in time ease her mind. She listened almost apathetically. I grew eloquent and passionate. Was I not pleading for my own sake as well as hers?

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If I could but persuade her she was unaccountable for what she had done, some remnant of the happiness which a few days ago I had promised myself might even now be left.

"Basil," she whispered, "I have been dreaming horrible things. Will they try me—and hang me?"

"We are in Spain, dearest. Even if you were guilty, the English law could not reach you."

She started. "And it was for this you hurried to Spain? To save me from a felon's death?"

"To save you from what, in your state at the time, you could not bear. I say again you are innocent, but I dare not risk the trial."

She was silent for some minutes; then she spoke.

"I am proud, passionate, wicked," she said; "but I could never have meant to do this. I was mad! I must have been mad! Basil, you could tell them I was mad. They would believe you, and forgive me."

She looked at me imploringly.

"I could stand up," I said, "and state on oath that you were at the time in a raging delirium. I could pledge my professional reputation that your actions were the result of madness. Fear nothing on that score, my wife."

I spoke boldly; but as I spoke a thought shot through me—a thought which blanched my cheek and brought the beads of perspiration to my brow. I knew enough of law to be aware that a husband could not in a criminal case give evidence for or against his wife. My marriage with Philippa had deprived her of the benefit of my testimony as to her insanity. I trembled like a leaf as I pictured what might happen in the event of her being tried for the murder of Sir Mervyn Ferrand. The very

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nurses had but seen her sane. No one but myself and perhaps my servant had seen her in her madness.

My dismay was such that I was bound to leave the room, in order to recover my presence of mind. Again and again I thanked Heaven that we were on foreign soil. The thought that my unreasoning love might have destroyed her I loved was almost more than I could bear.

I fancy I have lingered long enough over that terrible time, when my wife first learned that the dream which had haunted her was reality—that her hand had unknowingly avenged her supposed and premeditated wrong. Let me but say that the mental anguish into which the knowledge plunged her was not unattended by physical evil. In fact, for many days my poor girl was ill, very ill. My mother and I nursed her with every care, and by and by youth and a splendid constitution reasserted themselves, and, a shadow of her former self, she was able to leave her bed. My mother was tenderness itself to her daughter. She knew nothing of the true cause of her illness; indeed, she blamed me roundly for not having taken proper care of my beautiful bride, and vowed laughingly that for the future nothing should induce her to trust Philippa out of her sight.

Now that Philippa knew all she had done, I thought it better to tell her that, although he had no intention of so doing, Sir Mervyn Ferrand, in causing a mock marriage to be celebrated, had by a strange chance really made her his wife. This gave her little comfort. "It makes my crime the greater," she said bitterly. "I have killed my husband instead of my seducer! I am not fit to live!"

Weeks went by. Philippa gradually grew stronger, and, what was even more a cause of joy to me, calmer

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and more reasonable on a certain subject. With all the power I could bring to bear, I had never ceased to impress upon her that morally she was innocent, and I believed my words were bearing fruit. Her fits of mental anguish and self-reproach grew of less frequent occurrence. She did not, whenever we were alone, continually harp upon her crime. Calm seemed to settle upon us once more, and I ventured to hope that the great physician, Time, would one day bring to my wife's heart something that might be called sorrowful happiness; but I knew I must wait years and years for this.

She was changed, greatly changed. Her lips seldom smiled: her eyes never brightened, unless when she saw me drawing near. She seemed older and graver. But I knew, in spite of all, she loved me with a deathless love.

Although at last we had ceased to discuss the sorrow of our life, I suspected it was seldom absent from her mind. Sometimes as I lay beside her I heard her moaning and talking in her troubled dreams, and too well I knew the cause. As my arm stole round her, and assured her of the safety and certainty of my great love, in my heart I cursed the dead man whose evil deed had brought such lasting woe on the fair head pillowed on my bosom. Ah me! what life might have been for us two, now that love reigned between us!

Once—it was shortly after Philippa began to creep, a weak invalid, about the fragrant *patio*—she said to me, with evident meaning in her voice,

"Basil, do you see the London papers?"

"Sometimes—not always. I have almost forgotten England."

"Promise me you will see them every day."

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"I will, if you wish; but why?"

Her voice sank. "Can you not guess? Basil, listen. I have consented to be guided by you. I am praying that the day may come when I shall think as you think. But what if an innocent person were accused of the crime I have committed? Then there is but one course; you could urge nothing against it. Promise me you will see the paper every day as soon as it reaches here. I shall have no peace unless you do."

I promised fearlessly. Justice does sometimes make mistakes, but not such a mistake as the one hinted at by Philippa. No; Sir Mervyn Ferrand's death was a mystery never to be solved. So, to set my poor wife at ease on the matter, I wrote and ordered that *The Times* should be posted to me every day.

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CHAPTER XII.

TEMPTED TO DISHONOR.

I HATE looking back and re-reading words which I have written while the impulse was upon me; but I fancy I have somewhere called this tale a confession; if not, I should have done so. It claims no more to be ranked as a work of art than as a work of imagination. How could it? It holds only two characters—a man and a woman. It treats but of their love and of a few months of their lives. Nevertheless, in telling it I have endeavored to conceal nothing. I have tried to describe my thoughts, my hopes, my fears, my sorrows, and my joys, as they really were. I have, I believe, suppressed nothing which could lead any one to condemn my actions more strongly than, it may be, they now condemn them. My wish has been to show myself as I was then—no doubt am now—a weak, selfish man; yet, for the love which he bore a woman, one willing to risk fortune, life, even honor. If I have failed in my attempt to represent myself as such a one, believe it is not from intention, but from sheer inability.

But whether I have so far succeeded or failed in my purpose I know not; but I know that in this chapter I must, perforce, fail. The language rich and powerful enough to serve my needs has yet to be invented. The writer who could in any fitting way reproduce my thoughts has yet to be born.

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And yet the chapter will be a short one. It will be but the record of a few hours; but such hours! Hours during which I struggled against a temptation to commit, not only crime, but base, cowardly crime; a temptation stronger, I dare to think, than poor human nature has as yet been subjected to. My words sound bold; but listen.

Oh, that one morning! How well I can remember it! Our breakfast was just over. The quaint-shaped little table, with its snowy cloth throwing into relief the deep colors of the luscious fruit upon it, still stood in the awning-roofed *patio*. I was alone, my mother and Philippa having retired in-doors to see about some domestic economy. I lounged lazily and at my ease. I rolled and lighted a cigarette, blaming myself as I did so for my barbarity in profaning the blossom-scented air with tobacco-smoke. Then I took from my pocket the London *Times*, which had arrived by the last post, and listlessly set to work to skim its lengthy columns.

I had no fear as to what the paper might contain. It was not from newspaper reports that I apprehended danger. I had, however, noticed that Philippa, when she saw me with a newspaper in my hand, eyed me anxiously and inquiringly; so that generally I contrived to glance through it when she was absent. I never permitted her to touch it until I had read it; but my only reason for this prohibition was, that I feared lest some chance allusion to the mysterious and undiscovered crime might distress her. Her own far-fetched fancy that another might be accused of it gave me not a moment's uneasiness.

So I turned and doubled back the broad sheets. I ran down the topics of the day. I skimmed the leading

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articles. I glanced at the foreign news; paid scant attention to law reports, and disregarded altogether the money-market intelligence. At last I turned my attention to the provincial news column. A name caught my eye; a cold shiver of dread ran through me. My cigarette fell on the marble pavement, and lay there unheeded, as, with agitation which no words can describe, I read a short paragraph placed under the heading of the principal town of the county in which Roding was situated. Read!

"William Evans, the man accused of the murder of Sir Mervyn Ferrand, Bart., in January last, will be tried at these Assizes, which open on the twentieth. The case, which excites considerable interest, will be taken on the first day. It is reported that although fresh evidence against the prisoner will be forthcoming, it will be of a purely circumstantial nature."

Every word of that accursed paragraph seemed like a blow falling upon my head. For some minutes I sat as one stunned. I felt my teeth chattering. I knew that my cheek was blanched. Philippa's fanciful dread had come to pass! Another—an innocent man—was bearing the blame of her own mad act! Dazed, stupid, scarcely able to comprehend what must be the full effect of what I had just read, I sat motionless, with my eyes fixed upon that fatal sheet.

The sound of my mother's pleasant voice calling to Philippa at last awoke me from my stupor. They were coming. I could not face them. I doubled up the newspaper, thrust it into my pocket, and rushed out into the street. As yet I had not dared to imagine what this intelligence might mean to us. I must have long hours

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of solitude, in order to decide what course should be adopted to face this, the last, the worst peril.

I passed swiftly through the iron gate. I went up the narrow street at a pace which must have made all who saw me think me mad. Whither did I go? I scarcely remember. I think it must have been to one of the public gardens; but in that hour all sense of locality left me. I went instinctively in search of solitude. I found, I know not how or where, some shady deserted spot. There, in the anguish of my heart, amid the wreck of my sand-founded happiness, I threw myself on the ground, and dug my finger-nails into the dry soil.

At first I thought I was going or had gone mad. The thoughts which rushed through my mind were disjointed, and wanted coherence. An innocent man accused of the crime! To be tried on the twentieth! The twentieth! and now it is the sixteenth! Fresh evidence forthcoming! The fools—the utter fools! This the boasted detective skill! To arrest on suspicion, to bring to trial a man who must be ignorant of everything connected with the murder! What is to be done? What can be done? Oh, my wife! my poor darling wife!

Then, I believe, I cried like a child. It seemed to me that all was lost. There was but one thing to be done—one course to be taken. My darling must give herself up to justice, and by her confession free this luckless wretch who now stands in peril of his life. She must bear the shame of the trial, and trust to human justice and the mercy which she had a right to expect. Oh, it was pitiful, pitiful! For a long while no alternative course suggested itself to me.

Human justice! What is justice? See how it can err! It can arrest, try, and—oh, horrible thought!—

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perhaps condemn to death an innocent man! How then would it fare with Philippa? Who, now that marriage has sealed my lips, was there to prove her madness when she slew that man? I raged at the thought. It seemed to me that we were hard and fast in the toils. I might, it is true, call William, my servant, to swear that her manner was strange and wild upon that night. I might call the nurses to prove that when first they saw her she was recovering from an attack of mania. But would they be credited? Would not a clever lawyer soon convince twelve ordinary men that it was not her madness which prompted the crime, but the crime which produced the madness? We were indeed meshed and bound; hemmed in on every side; helpless and, it seemed, hopeless!

And Philippa must be told this! I must tell her! How could I nerve myself to make the truth known to her—now, of all times, when her health was all but restored; when a kind of sad but placid acquiescence in what fate had wrought seemed to be gradually coming over her; now, when I was once more building up hopes of happiness for her as well as for me! For I knew—ah! think of this, and pity me—that before another half year should pass there might be given to my wife and me a gift which would go far toward sweeping away the memories of gloom and horror which had of late spread over our lives. I even dared to hope, to feel certain, that as she gazed into baby eyes, as she pressed a tiny head to her bosom, some, nay, much of the lost sweetness and glory of life might return to my love.

Think of this, and picture me lying on the ground that day, with the damning intelligence fresh on my mind! Think that in a few hours I must return to my home,

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and tell my wife that the bolt had fallen! There was no alternative!

No alternative? Stay, there is an alternative! The blood seemed to course wildly through my veins, my heart beat fiercely, my lips grew dry, and a choking sensation came over me, as for the first time the simple yet certain way of cutting the knot of my difficulties flashed across my mind. So simple, so easy it at first appeared, that I laughed at my stupidity in not having seen it at once.

Tear that accursed paper to pieces, Basil North! Scatter those pieces to the winds. Forget what you have read. Go back to your luxurious, flower-bedecked home. Meet the one you love with a smile upon your face: you have forced smiles before now! Greet her as usual. Say nothing of this morning's news. Keep your own counsel; bury all you have learned in your secret heart. Do this, and be happy forever more!

But the man—the man who in a few days' time is to be tried for another's act? Well, what of him? The fool will doubtless be acquitted. Fool! Yes, it is the right term for one who can bring himself under suspicion. But if Justice runs on the wrong track until the end—if that man dies?

What then? What is this miserable life, what are a hundred lives when weighed against Philippa's happiness? What is conscience? What is right and wrong? What is the phantom which men call honor? What, after all, is crime? Be silent, and forget. You are asked to do no more. You have riches, youth, health, and strong will. The fairest woman on the earth adores you. Why hesitate? Why let one boor's life weigh in the scale?

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Argue the matter in another way. Are not thousands of men slain every year by the whim of a monarch or a statesman? The thought of their death troubles not those who send them forth to fight. Men kill each other for revenge, for money, for a point of honor, and the killer lives on like other men live! Trust this man to the vaunted array of Justice. He is innocent, and will come from the ordeal unscathed. If found guilty, let him die. He will not be the first innocent man who has died, nor will he be the last to die. It is but one life! He is nothing to you; think of him no more. Come what may, you will always have your sunny home and the woman you love. Her children will grow up around you. Why hesitate? A life's happiness is to be won by simply sealing your lips. Its cost is but, supposing Justice blunders, to bear the burden of one man's death. A paltry price!

This was the temptation with which I wrestled during those long hours. Again and again I was on the point of yielding. Once or twice I rose to my feet with the fixed determination of destroying that paper, and letting things take their own course. Once or twice I even forced my steps some distance in the direction of home, but each time I turned, went back to the sheltered spot, threw myself again on the ground, and fought the battle anew.

No, I could not do this thing. I was a gentleman and a man of honor. Paltry as the price was when compared with what it might buy, I could not pay it. Although my whole soul was merged in Philippa's welfare, I could not, even for her sake, suffer an innocent man to be done unjustly to death. The crime was too black, too base, too contemptible! I felt sure that, with the man's blood morally on my head, the supremest joys which life

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could give would not lull my conscience to rest. I knew it would not be long before remorse and shame drove me to commit suicide.

Let the preachers say that sin is easy; that wrong is more alluring than right. There may be some sins which are easily committed, but I dare to say that there are others which the average man, educated by the code of honor, and dreading shame and cowardice, finds it far easier to avoid than to bring himself to commit. No, every sin is not easy!

But all the same my struggle was a mortal one. At times I fancy—it may be but fancy—that even now my mind bears some traces of that conflict; a conflict in which my victory meant ruin to my nearest and dearest. Was I not right when I said that my temptation was an all but unparalleled one? Yet in reasserting this let me humbly disclaim all credit for not having yielded. I strove to yield, but could not.

It was only when I had conquered, and put the temptation from me, that I was able to see how utterly useless such a crime as that urged upon me would have been. Doubtless Philippa, sooner or later, would have learned that Sir Mervyn Ferrand's supposed murderer had paid the penalty of the crime. How would it have fared with us then—then, when reparation was placed out of the question? Knowing as I did every thought of my wife's, every turn of her impulsive, sensitive nature, I was fain to tell myself that such news would be simply her death-blow.

But what was to be done? Finding that I could not compass the treachery which I dared to meditate, I cast about for another loophole of escape. What if I were to return to England, and accuse myself of the crime? To

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insure Philippa's safety I would right willingly give away my own life. It showed the state to which my mind was reduced when I say that I considered this scheme in all its bearings, and for a while thought it furnished a solution to my difficulties! I wonder if my brain was wandering?

I laughed in bitter merriment as the absurdity of my new plan forced itself upon me. I had forgotten Philippa, and what the effect of such a sacrifice would be upon her. I had forgotten that she loved me, even as I loved her; that my dying for her sake—for the sake of saving her from the consequences of that gruesome night—would make an expiation, if any were due from her, the most fearful which human or diabolical ingenuity could devise.

No! Neither by sinning against my fellow-man nor by a voluntary sacrifice of my own life could I save her. After all my protracted mental struggles, all my lonely hours of anguish and wild scheming, I was forced to return to the point from which I started. Philippa must surrender herself, and free this innocent man. There was, indeed, no alternative!

And a day gone, or all but gone! The trial on the twentieth! To reach England—to reach Tewnham in time to stop that trial, we must travel day and night. Day and night, across sunny or starlit Spain—across pleasant France—we must speed on, until we reached our own native land, now lying in all the rich calm of the early autumn. I must lead my wife, my love, to her doom!

I rose from the ground. I felt weary, and as if I had been cudgelled in every limb. I dragged myself slowly back to my home. "She must be told; she must be told. But how to tell her?" I muttered as I went along.

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My appearance must have been wretched; for I received the impression that several grave-looking Sevillaños turned and looked after me as I passed by. Even as a cowardly felon who drags himself slowly to the scaffold, I dragged myself to the gate of our pleasant home, and on tottering feet passed into that fragrant space in which the happiest hours of my life had been spent.

As I entered, the remembrance of some tale which once I had read flashed through my mind—a tale of the ferocity of a by-gone age. It was of a prisoner who was forced by his captors to strike a dagger into the heart of the woman he loved. I know not where the tale is to be found or when I read it.

But it seemed to me that mine was a parallel case.

Pity me!

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST HOPE.

THEY were sitting in the courtyard, my mother and my wife. They looked the embodiment of serene happiness. Their large fans—the use of the fan came like an inspiration to Philippa, my mother acquired it after much practice—were languidly waving to and fro. Philippa's rounded arm was outstretched; her fair left hand was in the clear water which fell from the fountain and filled a white marble basin, in which the gold carp darted about in erratic tacks. She was moving her fingers gently backward and forward, startling the timid fish, and half smiling at their terror. It seemed to me that my mother was remonstrating at the uproar she was creating in the brilliant-coated republic.

That picture is still in my mind. That picture! I can sit now in my chair, lay down my pen, and call up every picture of that time. Nothing, save the grief, has ever faded, or ever will fade, from my memory.

It was well for both of us that I had fought out the battle with myself in solitude, where no eye could see me, where I could see no one. Even as it was, knowing what a change my news must work, I paused, and a ghost of the day's temptation rose before me. But it rose too late. The die was cast. Philippa had seen me, and my mother's eyes followed hers. I braced myself up, and went toward them with as jaunty a manner

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as I could assume. My mother began a mock tirade on my shameful desertion of Philippa and herself. Her words carried no meaning to my ears. My eyes met those of my wife.

With her I made no attempt at concealment. Where was the good? The worst, the very worst had come. My eyes must have told her the truth.

I saw her sweet face catch fire with alarm. I saw her lips quiver. I saw the look of anguish flash into her eyes; yet I knew that I was helpless, utterly helpless.

She rose. I made some conventional excuse and went to my room. In a moment Philippa was at my side.

"Basil, husband, love," she whispered, "it has come!"

I laid my head on the table and sobbed aloud. Philippa's arms were wreathed around my neck.

"Dearest, I knew it must come. I have known it ever so long. Basil, do not weep. Once more, I tell you I am not worth such love as yours."

I covered her dear face with kisses. I strained her to my heart. I lavished words of love upon her. She smiled faintly, then sighed hopelessly—a sigh which almost broke my heart.

"Tell me all, my love," she said, calmly. "Let me know the very worst."

I could not speak; for the life of me the words would not come. With trembling hands I drew out the newspaper, and pointed to the fatal lines. She read them with a calm which almost alarmed me.

"I knew it must be," was all she said.

I threw myself on my knees before her. I embraced her. I was half distraught. Save for my wild ejaculations of undying love, there was silence for many minutes between us.

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Presently, with great force, she raised my head, and looked at me with her sweet and sorrowful eyes.

"Basil, my dearest, you have been wrong. The right is right, the wrong is wrong. See what you have done! Had you not striven to save me, only I should have had to answer for this. Now it is you and me, and perhaps a third—an innocent, stainless life, that will be wrecked."

"Spare me! Spare me!" I said. "As you love me, spare me!"

She kissed me. "Dearest, forgive me. I should not blame you. Only I am to blame." Then, with a sudden change in her voice, "When do we start for England, Basil?"

Although I expected this question, I trembled and shuddered as I heard it. Too well I knew what England meant. It meant Philippa's standing in open court, in a prisoner's dock, the center of a gaping crowd, self-accused of the murder of her husband! And as I pictured this, once more, and for the last time, the temptation shook me.

I spoke, but I averted my eyes from hers. I could not meet them. My voice was husky and strange; it sounded like the voice of another man. A sort of undercurrent of thought ran through me, that if Philippa would but share it, I could bear any burden, any dishonor.

"Listen!" I said, in quick accents. "We are far away; safe. We love each other. We can be happy. Let the man take his chance. What does anything matter, so long as we love and are together?"

I felt that her eyes were seeking mine. I felt a change in the clasp of her hand. I knew that she was nobler and better than I.

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"Basil," she said softly, and speaking like one in a dream, "it was not my husband, not the man I love, who said that. I forgive you for the sake of your great love, for the sake of all you have done, or tried to do, for me. Tell me now, when do we start for England?"

Her words brought back my senses. Never in the wildest height of my passion had I loved Philippa as I loved her at that moment. I besought her pardon. She gave it, and once more repeated her question.

With the calm of settled despair I consulted the railway-guide, and found that if we left Seville to-morrow morning by the first train, we might, by travelling day and night, early on the morning of the twentieth reach the town in which the trial was to be held. I made the result of my researches known to my wife; and upon my assuring her that we should have time to spare, she left all the arrangement of the journey to me.

After this, another painful question arose. Was my mother to be told? Philippa, who may, perhaps, in her secret heart have craved for a woman's support and sympathy in her approaching trial, at first insisted that my mother should be taken into our confidence—a confidence which, alas! in a few days' time would be gossip to the world. I besought her to waive the point, to spare my mother's feelings until the very last moment. We could not take her with us on our hurried journey. We were young; she was old. The fatigue, combined with the grief, would be more than her frame could endure. I could not bear to think of her waiting lonely in Seville for the bad news which she knew must come in a day or two from England. Let us say nothing respecting the wretched errand on which we are bound. Let us depart in secret, and leave some plausible explanation behind us.

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To my relief, Philippa at last consented to this. Then, after a long, tearful embrace, we steeled ourselves to join my mother at the evening meal, and to bear ourselves so that she should suspect nothing of the tempest within our hearts. We did not very long subject ourselves to this strain upon our nerves. It seemed to me now that every moment spent otherwise than alone with my wife was a precious treasure wasted, a loss which I should for ever regret. So very early we pleaded fatigue, and retired to our rest. Such rest!

Philippa bade my mother good-night with an embrace so long and passionate that I feared it would awaken alarm, especially when it was succeeded by my own veiled, but scarcely less emotional, adieu. For who could say that we should ever meet again? I do not believe it struck Philippa that in accompanying her I was running the slightest risk. Had she thought so, she would have insisted upon going alone. But I knew that the part I had played in that night's work would probably bring a severe punishment upon my own head. What did I care for that?

Silently and sadly in the retirement of our room we made our preparations for the journey, which began with the morn. There was no need to cumber ourselves with much luggage. We should rest in no bed until the trial was over. What resting-place might then be Philippa's, Heaven only knew! So our packing was soon completed.

Then I wrote a letter, to be given to or found by my mother in the morning. I told her that an important matter took me post-haste to England; that Philippa had determined to accompany me; that I would write as soon as we reached London. I gave no further explana-

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tion. I hoped she would attribute my sudden flight to the erratic nature which she often averred I possessed.

After all, the deception mattered little. In a week's time nothing would matter. Grief, overwhelming grief, would be my portion; a portion which, by her affection for me and for Philippa, my poor mother would be forced to share.

All being now ready for our start, we strove to win some hours of sleep. Our efforts were mocked to scorn. Through that, the last night we might spend alone together, I believe neither my wife nor myself closed an eyelid. Let me draw a veil over my wild distress and Philippa's calm acquiescence in her fate. Some grief is too sacred to describe.

Morning! Bright, broad, clear, cool, odorous morning! Our sleeplessness had at least spared us the anguish of awaking, and, while for a moment glorying in the beauty of the world, to remember what this morning meant to us. Giving ourselves ample time to reach the railway-station, we crept from our room, and, with eyes full of blinding tears, crossed the pleasant *patio*. I paused in the centre, and plucking a lovely spray from the great orange-tree, kissed it and gave it to my wife. Without a word she placed it in the bosom of her dress. As she drew her mantle aside to do so, for the first time I noticed that she wore the very dress which clad her on that fatal night. Although it was utterly unsuited to the almost tropical heat through which we should have to travel, I dared not remonstrate with her. Now, of all times, her slightest wish should be my law.

Noiselessly I undid the massive studded wooden gate, which at night-time closed the entrance to the *patio*. Unseen, we stepped into the shady, narrow street. Our

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luggage was light. I could carry it with ease to the station, which was not a great distance off. We were there only too soon.

We had to wait some time ere the train, which, following the example of the true Spaniard, declines on any consideration to be hurried, made its appearance. We took our seats in silence. At last the dignified train condescended to move onward. We sat side by side, and gazed and gazed in the direction of the beautiful city from which we were flying; gazed until we saw the very last of it, until even the great towering Giralda was lost to view. Then, and only then, I think we fully realized to what end we were speeding.

The next three days and nights seem now little more to me than a whirling dream. On and on we went to work out our fate; over the same ground which I had traversed, with scarcely less agitated feelings, some months ago. I ground my teeth when I thought how little my strenuous and seemingly successful efforts had availed. Now, not from any omission of precaution; not because the law compelled; not by the exercise of force; but simply on account of the great dictum of right and wrong, we were, of our own accord, retracing our steps to face the danger from which we had fled. Oh, bitter irony of destiny!

What was money to me now? Nothing but so much dross! It could do one thing, only one, that gold which I lavished so freely on that journey. It could assure that Philippa and I might travel alone. It could give us privacy for the time that journey lasted, that was all.

Yet although alone, we spoke but little. Our thoughts were not such as can be expressed by words. Her hand in mine, her head on my shoulder—sleeping when we

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could sleep, waking and looking into each other's faces—knowing that every mile of sunny or starlit country over which we passed brought us nearer to the end. Ah! I understood then how it is that lovers who are menaced by some great sorrow can kill themselves, and die smiling in each other's arms! We might have done so; but our deaths would have left to perish that stranger whom we were speeding to save.

So, as in a dream, the hours, the days, the nights, went by. We might have been travelling through the fairest scenery in the world, or through the most arid desert. I scarcely troubled to glance out of the carriage window. The world for me was inside.

It was after we left Paris—Paris, which to-day seemed all but within stone's-throw of London—that I aroused myself, and braced my energies to discuss finally with Philippa our proper plan of action. I felt that my right course would be to go straight to some solicitor, tell the tale, and ask him to put matters in train. But I could not bring myself to do this. Our secret was as yet our own. Moreover, through the misery of those hours, one ray of hope had broken upon me. If Philippa could be brought to yield to my guidance, to follow my instructions, it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that we might be saved, and saved with clean hands.

"Dearest," I whispered, "to-night we shall be in London."

Her fingers tightened on mine. "And at Tewnham?" she said. "We shall be in time?"

"In ample time. But, Philippa, listen—"

"Basil, as you love me, not one word to tempt, to dissuade me!"

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"Not one; but listen. Sweetest, if you will be guided by me, even now all may go well. This man—"

"The poor man who is standing in my place?"

"Yes; listen. Heaven forbid that I should tempt you. Think; he is, no doubt, a man of a lowly station in life. Philippa, I am rich, very rich."

"I do not understand you," she said, pressing her hand to her brow.

"Money will compensate for anything. Let him stand his trial. He is innocent. If there is justice in the land, he may, he must be found not guilty."

"But the agony of mind he must pass through!"

"For that I will pay him over and over again. He may be but a country boor, to whom a thousand pounds would be inexhaustible wealth. But, whatever his station, the compensation sent to him by an unknown hand shall make him bless the day which laid him under the false accusation. Reflect, look at the matter in every light. I swear to you that in my opinion we may, with a clear conscience, await the result of the trial."

She sighed, but made no answer. Her silence was a joy to me. It told me that my specious argument carried weight. I took her hands and kissed them. I told her again and again that I loved her; that my life as well as hers depended on her yielding.

It was long before she yielded. The thought of a fellow-creature lying in prison, perhaps for months, and to-morrow to stand in shame before his judges, on account of a deed which she herself had done, was anguish to her noble nature. Then, growing desperate at seeing the only plank which could save us from the wreck spurned for the sake of what, in my present mood, I was able to believe too finely strained a scruple, I used my

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last and, as I rightly judged, my most powerful argument. I told her that it would be not only she who would suffer for that unconscious act, but that I, her husband, must pay the penalty due from an accessory after the crime.

Heaven forgive me for the anguish my words caused that loving heart! Philippa, on whom the intelligence of my danger fell like a thunderbolt, sank back in her seat, pale and trembling. Had I ever doubted that my wife's heart-whole love was my own, that look would have dispelled the doubt.

She prayed and besought me to leave her at the next station; to let her finish the journey and make her avowal alone. My reply was short, but sufficiently long to put all hope of my consenting to such a course out of her head. Then, for my sake, she yielded.

"On one condition—one only," she said.

"Be guided by me in this. In all else you shall do as you like."

"I must be in the court, Basil. I must hear the trial. If the worst happen, there must not be the delay of a moment; then and there I must proclaim the truth."

"You shall be at hand—close at hand. I will be present."

"No! I must be there. I must hear and see all. If the man is found guilty, I must, before his horrible sentence is pronounced, stand up and declare his innocence."

"All that could be done afterward."

"No; it must be done then. Basil, fancy—put yourself in his place! Nothing could atone for his anguish at hearing himself condemned to death for a crime he knows nothing of. I must be there. Promise me I shall be there, and for your sake I will do as you wish."

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It was the best concession I could get. I promised. I concealed the fact that if, when sentence was pronounced, a woman rose in the body of the court, and asserted the prisoner's innocence and her own guilt, the probabilities were she would be summarily ejected. This made no difference. Let Philippa be silent; let the man be found not guilty, and the next train could bear us back to Seville.

Yes, even now there was hope!

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE CRIMINAL COURT.

WE reached Charing Cross at four o'clock on the morning of September 20th. The first train by which we could get to Tewnham was timed to leave Liverpool Street at seven, so that we had an hour or two to spare for such refreshment as we cared to take, such rest as we dared to allow ourselves. What with the fatigue of continuous travel, and the dread of what this day was to bring forth, it may be easily believed that we were thoroughly worn out. We were, indeed, more fitted to go to bed and sleep for a week, than to proceed upon the last stage of our dismal journey.

But there was no help for it. If we meant to be in time, we must go on by the early morning train. I begged my wife to lie down, and endeavor to snatch an hour's sleep. She refused firmly. Much of that calm which had characterized her since the moment when I broke the fatal news to her had vanished. Its place was now taken by an excitement, suppressed, but nevertheless clearly manifest to my eyes. The fear that we should not reach Tewnham in time for the trial seemed to haunt her unceasingly. It was for this reason she so peremptorily refused to lie down and court sleep. She feared lest, our eyes once closed, we should, from sheer exhaustion, sleep for hours, and so miss the morning train. She was ever picturing the horror of that poor unknown

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man's being led from the dock, with the death sentence ringing in his ears.

So the time which elapsed before we started for Tewnham we spent in the hotel. I bespoke rooms by telegram, sent when we reached Folkestone. We made an apology for a meal; in fact, what we could get at that time of night was of itself little more than apology. We sat all but silent, watching the hands of the clock, which told us how fast the precious moments were passing away. We saw the gray morning struggle with, and at last conquer, the yellow gas-light. We heard the hum of traffic growing louder and louder in the streets below us. Then we turned to make what may be rightly called our last adieus. Who could say that to-day my wife and I might not be parted forever?

While at the hotel I tried to obtain the file of the *Times*. I wanted to look back and see if I could find the account of magisterial proceedings against this unlucky William Evans. He must, of course, have appeared before the lesser tribunal, and could I see the account of his appearance, I should be able to judge as to the strength of the case against him. But the file was not forthcoming. Perhaps it did not exist; perhaps the sleepy-eyed Teutonic waiter did not understand what I wanted; so, still in the dark as to why suspicion should have fallen upon this innocent man, we left the hotel and drove to Liverpool Street Station.

At nine o'clock our journey was ended. We stood on the platform of Tewnham railway-station. My poor wife wore a thick black veil, so her face I could not see; but I knew it was as pale as death. Now and again her hand, which rested on my arm, pressed it convulsively. I think we were the most unhappy pair on the earth!

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We were even denied the time for any more farewells or expressed regrets. The hour was chiming from the old cathedral tower. The business of the Courts, I knew, always began at ten o'clock, and considering the crowd which would most surely be attracted by so interesting a case as this trial for murder committed so many months ago, I felt sure that unless we proceeded at once to the Shirehall, our chance of gaining entrance would be but a small one. I hailed one of the close cabs which were waiting outside the station.

As I did so I felt a heavy hand laid upon my shoulder, and heard a rich, pleasant-sounding, and not unfamiliar voice exclaim, "Basil North, as I'm a sinner!"

That any one should at this moment address Basil North in a merry way seemed a positive incongruity. I turned round almost angrily, and found myself face to face with an old friend. He was a barrister named Grant; a man four or five years my senior, but one with whom, before I forswore the society of my fellow-men, I had been on intimate terms. I had not seen him for a considerable time; but had heard, casually, that he was making great strides in his forensic career.

In spite of my distress, I returned his greeting, and grasped his hand warmly. After all it seemed a relief to find that I had a friend left in the world.

"What brings you here?" I asked.

"The only thing that could bring me to such a place —circuit work. I have an important case on to-day. That's the worst of a place so near London as this one. One is tempted to spend the nights in town, which means getting up at an unholy hour in the morning. But you! Why are you here? I heard you were as rich as Midas, and living abroad in luxury."

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"I have been abroad for some time. I hope to go back again very soon."

"Happy man!" he ejaculated. I could scarcely keep the bitter smile from my lips, as I thought how ill applied were his words.

As he spoke he glanced at Philippa, whose grace and beauty of form defied the concealment attempted by thick veil and sombre garments.

"But what brings you to this sleepy old town?" continued Grant.

I hesitated for a moment. Then, thinking that truth, or at least half truth, was the best, told him I had come down to witness the trial for murder.

"I should doubt your getting into court," he said. "The morbid interest excited around about here is, I am told, very great. The sheriff is besieged by applications for tickets."

"Couldn't you help me? The fact is, I have a particular reason, not mere curiosity, for wishing to be present at this trial."

"I don't think I can," said Grant. "Does your—the lady wish to go with you?"

"My cousin—yes," I said, seeing that he expected an introduction. He raised his hat, and made some courteous and pleasant remark, to which Philippa, to my surprise, replied in a calm and fitting way.

Grant knew I had no sister. I called her cousin because I had a wild hope that, if the worst happened, I might be able to conceal the true relationship in which we stood, and so be permitted to give evidence on her behalf. I trusted my wife would guess that I had a good reason for this deception.

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"Try and manage this for me, Grant," I said so earnestly that my friend made no further demur.

"Take me in your cab, and I will see what I can do."

During our drive to the Shirehall I asked Grant what he knew about the impending trial.

"Nothing," he said frankly. "I hate murder cases—hate even to read about them. Of course I know that Sir Mervyn Ferrand was killed, and hidden in the snow for days and days. But I know no more."

"Who is the accused?"

"I don't know. I thought, from your anxiety, you must know him."

"Will he be found guilty?"

"I don't know. Stay, I heard some one who ought to be well informed say yesterday that the case for the prosecution was most feeble. He seemed to doubt if the grand jury would return a true bill."

As I heard this I pressed Philippa's hand secretly. I felt that she was trembling.

The drive to the Shirehall occupied only a few minutes. We did not go to the public entrance, in front of which I could see a crowd of people nearly blocking up the street. We stopped at another door, and Grant, after looking round, caught sight of what appeared to be an inspector of police. He entered into a little conversation with him, the result of which was that we were given into his care.

"This is a breach of the law," whispered my friend as he bade me good-by. "You will have to atone for it by a handsome gratuity."

We followed our guide. Philippa, although walking with a firm step, leaned heavily upon my arm. I scarcely know by what door we entered that palace of

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justice. The stalwart policeman led us through stone corridors and passages, which re-echoed with the tread of our feet, and at last we found ourselves before a double swinging plain oak door, over which in old English letters was written "Criminal Court."

I felt Philippa shudder, and knew that the sight of those words brought the horror of the situation fully home to her. Mechanically I pressed a sovereign in the hand of the venial inspector, or whatever he was; then, holding my wife's hand, I passed through the noiseless swinging door into the all but empty court.

A few policemen and other officials were lounging about. Two or three people, who had no doubt gained admittance in the same way as we had done, were seated in various coigns of vantage. I led Philippa up the broad steps, and pointed to one of the hard wooden benches provided for the accommodation of the general public. These benches were raised step by step, one above another. We chose our position about half-way up, on the right-hand side of the court. Philippa, with her thick veil falling down to her chin, and so defying recognition, sank wearily into her seat. I placed myself beside her; my hand crept under the cloak she wore and held her hand.

Surely it was all a dream—a dreadful, realistic dream! I should wake and find myself under the great orange tree in that courtyard in gay Seville, my half-smoked cigar and the book which I had been lazily reading lying at my feet; my mother opposite me, laughing at my somnolency, and Philippa's grave dark eyes looking with calm everlasting love into my own. I should wake and find the cool of the evening had succeeded to the glare of the afternoon. We should walk through the merry

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streets, lounge in the Alameda, wander through the glowing Alcazar gardens, or drive out miles and miles over the fertile smiling plains. Or I should even wake and find myself nodding over my fire in my lonely cottage, the stolid William the only human creature within hail; Philippa's return, the snow-storm, the dreadful discovery, the flight, Seville, the marriage—all, all a dream!

In a kind of stupor—the temporary reaction, I suppose, consequent upon such fatigue and trouble—I gazed round me, and wondered where I was.

What is this great empty building, lit from one side by large clerestory windows of ecclesiastical design? What are these dull gray vacant walls; that lofty ceiling crossed and cut into small squares by dark rafters; this leaded floor, on which feet fall all but noiselessly? What are those raised boxes on either side of the building—those small railed platforms all but adjoining them, and all but adjoining that panelled oak structure at the end facing me? What is that rectangular box-shaped erection with overhanging carved cornice? Let us away from this dismal, colorless place! Let me wake and find myself amid the flowers, orange trees, the fair sights and surroundings of our Spanish home.

No! I have but to turn my dazed eyes to the centre of space in which we sat, to know that I am dreaming no dream; that we must wait here and learn our fates. That oblong wooden enclosure with high sides, topped by a light iron railing, brings reality back to me. It is the prisoner's dock. In an hour's time a man will stand there. He will be brought up those stone steps which lead to it from below, the topmost flag of which I can just see. He will stand there for hours. As he leaves the dock,

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declared innocent or guilty, so will our lives be declared happy or miserable.

My hand holds my wife's yet closer; for the last minutes which may be ours to spend together are slipping by so fast, so very fast!

See, the clock under the balcony marks half-past nine. The all but deserted court begins to assume the appearance of preparing for business. Policemen and other officials pass to and fro, some arranging papers, some replenishing ink-bottles, and placing quill pens ready for the barristers and solicitors who will soon fill those front seats. Some one, with what seems to me bitter irony, places a magnificent bouquet of flowers on either hand of the judge's vacant chair. What have flowers in common with such a scene as this? Flowers, too, which are beautiful enough to recall to my mind the fair Spanish home, which, maybe, we shall see no more. Flowers in this den of sorrow! Rather should every seat, every beam be draped in black.

Now the doors on each side of the court open, and remain open. I hear a shuffling of many feet. People, in a continuous stream, pass through the entrance, and wend their way to the portion of the court allotted to the general public. So fast, so thick they come, that in ten minutes this space is thronged almost to suffocation. Philippa and I are pressed closer and closer to each other, as every inch of the bench on which we are seated is appropriated. The court is full.

Crowded by respectable-looking, well-dressed people, who have gained admission, as I heard, by favor of the sheriff. Yet, respectable as they are, each man, each woman, rushes in eagerly and strives for the best available seat. And for what reason? To see and hear a

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poor wretch tried for his life! In my bitter mood I look with hate on these sensation-seekers. I hate them even more when I think that their morbid craving for excitement may be satisfied with such food as they little expect; and I clinch my teeth as I picture the scene at that moment when Philippa, in pursuance of her immovable resolution, rises, and makes her effort to proclaim her own guilt and the convicted man's innocence. Although I strive to force the picture from my mind, by telling myself that justice cannot err, that the man will be acquitted, yet again and again the dread of the worst seizes me, and I hate every face in that crowd, which may, by and by, be gaping, with looks of wonder and curiosity, at the woman I love!

As in a haze, I see some faces which are familiar to me. A number of gentlemen enter, and seat themselves on the benches which counsel usually occupy. Some few of these I knew by sight. They are country gentlemen from the neighborhood of Roding, who are now called to serve on the grand jury. I see also the thin-faced, hawkish-looking woman who calls herself Mrs. Wilson. I am thankful that she takes a seat in front of us and does not see us. She, like ourselves, must know that an innocent man is this day about to be tried.

So for half an hour I sit, gazing now at the crowd of people, now at the empty dock and vacant bench in front of me; listening to the hum of conversation which rises from the packed court; longing for the moment to come when this dreadful suspense may end; yet all the same dreading and willing to put off that moment. And all the while Philippa, in her black garb, close to me and, unseen by our neighbors, holding my hand.

Hush! The door at the back of the bench opens,

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and at ten o'clock to the minute the red-robed judge appears. He bows to the court, seats himself, and by his action signifies that he is ready to begin the business of the day. No trembling prisoner in the dock ever scanned a judge's face with more anxiety than I scan his lordship's at this present moment.

An old man, too old, it seems to me, for such a responsible post; an amiable, pleasant-looking man—not, I venture to think, one who can bear the reputation of being a "hanging judge." I breathe a prayer that he may this day be able to direct aright the course of justice.

Hush! Hush! Silence in the court! Oh, my poor, sweet wife, let me grasp that hand yet closer, for the moment which for days and nights has never been absent from our minds has come! What will it bring us?

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CHAPTER XV.

THE BLACK CAP.

THERE is silence, or all but silence, in the court. The buzz of suppressed conversation sinks almost to nothing—absolutely to nothing as the judge's marshal rises, and after gabbling through the mysterious proclamation which begins "Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" declares the court open.

Philippa, still closely veiled, sits like a statue. Her hand, which ever grasps mine, scarcely responds to the pressure by which again and again I endeavor to bid her hope for the best. I would give much if even now I could get her to consent to my leading her away. I dare not suggest this. I know that doing so would be waste of words.

The court is open. The red judge is perusing letters and papers which lie in front of him as calmly and unconcernedly as if the life's happiness of, at least, one man and woman, did not greatly depend upon the view he takes of the case about to be tried. He raises one of his bouquets and inhales the perfume of the flowers. How can one in his position behave like an ordinary mortal? Were we not here, he might condemn an innocent man to a shameful death! I wonder if, with such horrible responsibility resting on him, a judge can ever really be a happy man?

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These thoughts seem trivial; but my mind is by now in a strange state; it is, indeed, so sensitive that every slight incident, every small ceremonial, of to-day seems to be impressed forever upon it.

A bewigged gentleman—the clerk of assize, the man next me tells his neighbor—rises and calls name after name, until he has fixed upon the twenty-three gentlemen needed to form the grand jury. They stand up in their places, and, in batches of four, are rapidly sworn. The absurd proclamation against vice and immorality is read; much good may it do every one present! Then the clerk sits down, and the judge, forsaking his papers, begins his work.

He arranges his robes to his satisfaction, leans forward, and, placing the tips of his long white fingers together, addresses—charges, I am told, is the right term—the grand jury in a pleasant, colloquial manner. I strain every aural nerve to catch the purport of his glib words. He is sure to say something about this important murder case. I shall, perhaps, be able to learn how it was that the man fell under suspicion.

Alas! the judge is one who by dint of years of practice has acquired the knack of using his voice only just so much as is absolutely necessary. The grand jury is close to him, and can, no doubt, hear him; but to those who, like ourselves, are far away in the background of the court, his remarks are inaudible. All I can catch is a closing caution to the grand jury, to bear in mind that it is not within its province to determine the innocence or guilt of the prisoners, but to simply decide whether there is or is not sufficient evidence for the cases to go to trial.

The grand jury files out of court to conduct its solemn deliberations in the place appointed. The judge ad-

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dresses a few smiling words to the sheriff and other magnates who, by right or favor, occupy seats on the bench; then he returns to the perusal of his papers.

For the first time since we entered the court Philippa speaks to me. "Are they trying him now?" she asks in a low awed whisper, yet in a voice so changed that I know what the suspense is costing her. Briefly I explain the procedure of the law, so far as I know it. She sighs, and says no more.

More monotonous calling of many names, to which summons, however, another class of men respond. The common jurymen are now being called. Probably, to save time, twelve men are sent into the box, where they sit, some appearing to enjoy the dignity of the position, some with stolid indifference, others with acute unhappiness plainly manifested. I look at these men with scarcely less interest than I look at the judge. On them, or on some of them, our fate rests as much, perhaps more, than it rests on him. Those men are trying us—not only the man who will by and by stand in that rail-topped enclosure into which we look down.

Twenty long weary minutes pass by. All eyes turn to a wooden gallery in the right-hand corner of the court. A door in the wall opens. The members of the grand jury emerge and fill the gallery. The foreman arms himself with a gigantic fishing-rod, to which he attaches a paper, which is conveyed by this clumsy method to that busy gentleman, the clerk of assize. What idiotic foolery all this seems to me!

The clerk detaches the document, glances at it, and looks up at the gallery.

"Gentlemen of the grand jury, you return a true bill against William Evans for murder?"

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"We do," answers the foreman with shy solemnity.

I grind my teeth. Fools! If men of culture and standing err like this, what can be expected from a common jury? It is well for me that I heard the caution just now given by the judge. I take such comfort as I can by thinking they have tried the evidence, not the man. What can the evidence be? Ah! we shall soon know.

The clerk turns, and, addressing no one in particular, says, "Bring up the prisoner." Once more I set my teeth. I feel my wife's arm tremble; her hand grows cold. I hear a buzz, as of expectation, run through the crowded court. Every eye turns in one direction—toward the empty dock. For a moment a species of dizziness comes over me; objects swim before my eyes. The sensation passes away. I recover myself. The dock is no longer untenanted. In the centre, with a stalwart policeman on either side of him, stands the accused—the man who, if needs be, must be saved by such a sacrifice!

From my place, far back in the public gallery, I can, of course, see nothing more of the prisoner than his back. I gaze at this with intense curiosity, endeavoring to determine the station of the man who is now about to be tried for his life. I can but gather this much: He is tall and slight. His dress is of a semi-respectable nature, but seems to have seen much service. He might be anything from a broken-down clerk to a gentleman's servant out at elbows. I rejoice at his poverty-stricken appearance. Judging from it, money will be welcome to him. Let the jury but assert his innocence, and I feel certain that the liberal pecuniary compensation which it is my intention to mete out will repay him a hundred times for the ordeal which he is undergoing.

Ordeal! Yes, it is the right word. It is easy to see

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it is a terrible ordeal to the poor fellow. No need to look at his face to be told that much. Even as he emerged from the cells below he seemed to quake with fear. Now he absolutely falls forward in the dock, supporting himself by grasping the iron railing which runs round the top. I notice that his fingers, as they cling to the iron bars, open and close convulsively. Every movement of his back and shoulders betrays fear and anguish of mind. His state is pitiable, so pitiable that one of his custodians places his hand under the wretched man's arm, and gives him the physical support which he so sorely needs. He bends his head as in shame, and I know that could I see his face, it would be white as my own or my wife's.

In spite of the strain upon my mind, I was able to wonder at the prisoner's hopeless demeanor. Although I had, as it were, torn my very heart out by the roots to insure this man's safety in the event of things going wrong with him; although I did not even now regret the course I had taken, I am bound to say that his cowardly behavior took away much of the sympathy which I should otherwise have felt for him in his unmerited predicament. It is, of course, very easy to say what one would do if in another's place. I certainly felt sure that, were I in that poor fellow's plight, consciousness of my own innocence would give me strength enough to raise my head, and face boldly all the judges, juries, and prosecuting counsel in the world. I was willing to make every allowance for the nervousness natural to such a position; but I groaned inwardly as I gazed upon that miserable, limp, half-standing, half-reclining form.

Why does he not stand upright? Too well I know that another is watching that abject wretch with interest

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even more intense than mine. I know that every attitude of shame or fear is understood by Philippa, and adds to the scruples which she feels at following my advice and awaiting the result of the trial. Every agonized movement of the prisoner in the dock seems to be faintly reproduced by the hand within my own. Every pang he suffers runs through the frame of the woman who knows that he is suffering for her deed.

The clerk reads over the indictment: "That he, William Evans, did feloniously, wilfully, and of malice aforethought kill and murder Sir Mervyn Ferrand, Baronet." As the reading proceeds Philippa draws me toward her. "Basil," she says in a low whisper, "this is more dreadful than I dreamed of. I cannot bear it longer. Think of that poor man's anguish! Basil, he also may have a wife who loves him; she may be in the court. Think of her! Oh! what can I do? What can I do?"

"Nothing—nothing but wait and hope," I answer.

"Could you not go down and speak to him, or send a message in some way? Tell him not to be so wretched; that even at the last moment he will be saved; that the real murderer will confess and free him. Basil, you must do this."

"I can not. I dare not. It would ruin us. Hush, dearest; be calm, and listen."

The reading of the indictment is now over. The clerk turns to the prisoner. "Are you guilty or not guilty?" he asks in a clear voice. Although every one in that court knows what the answer will be, there is a silence so profound that a pin might be heard drop. Every one seemed desirous of hearing the prisoner's voice. Even I,

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myself, lean forward, and strain every nerve to hear his plea.

There is a long, dread pause. It may be that the prisoner does not understand that he is expected to reply. It may be that his collapsed state deprives him of the power of speech. I notice that one of the policemen touches him on the shoulder and whispers to him. Still for a moment there is silence.

It is broken, but not by the prisoner. Philippa gives a low, soft wail, heard only, I think, by me.

"I can bear it no longer," she whispers. She snatches her hand from mine. She throws back her thick, dark veil, and stands erect in the body of the court. I cast one glance at her pale but determined-looking face, then bow my head upon my hands, and wish that death might at that moment smite us both. All is over! I am conquered!

Even as I hide my face I see every eye in that thronged court turning to the tall, majestic, dark-robed figure which rises in the midst of that motley throng. Then, clear and loud, I hear her beloved voice ring out.

"My lord," I hear her say. I raise my head at the sound. The eyes of bench, bar, jury, and public are fixed upon her. The very prisoner turns in the dock and gazes straight at her.

She gets no further than those two words. "Order in the court! Order in the court!" is shouted so sternly and fiercely that she all but loses her presence of mind. She falters, she hesitates, and glances helplessly around. I seize the moment. By sheer force I drag her back to her seat. I pray her by the love she bears me to wait in silence. I draw the veil over her face, to hide it from the hundreds of curious eyes which are turned upon it.

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While so doing, I hear the sharp mandate, "Turn that person out of court."

Had any serious attempt been made to put the order in force, I believe that Philippa would have resisted, and once more attempted to assert the prisoner's innocence and her own guilt—if it was guilt. Fortunately the policeman who draws near us to carry out the order is my friend of the morning who had accepted my gold. It may be on this account he favors us. It may be, when a momentary disturbance subsides, and the perpetrator does not seem bent upon repeating it, that the expulsion is not insisted upon. It may be that Philippa's accosting the judge was looked upon as a solecism brought about by the excitement of a weak woman who was in some way connected with the prisoner. I suppose such a scene does sometimes occur; and perhaps, if its repetition is guarded against, a humanely-minded judge will not deny the offender the sorry comfort of seeing her friend's trial to the end. Perhaps the judge who this day presides is unusually good-natured and easy-going. Any way, our friendly policeman does not carry out his instructions, and the court resumes its business.

But many curious looks are cast at the veiled woman by my side. I notice that the hawk-faced Mrs. Wilson turns in her seat, and looks always at us; and, strange to say, I notice that the prisoner in the dock is still staring fixedly in our direction. The policemen take him by the arms; face him round toward the bench. Once more the solemn question, "Are you guilty or not guilty?" is asked.

A short excited pause. The prisoner answers. Well, I know what he says, although he speaks so faintly that I do not hear his voice. Strange to say, his answer

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seems to create considerable agitation. People who are near to him look back and whisper to those in the rear. A barrister turns in his seat, and stares in a dumbfounded way at a gentleman behind him. This gentleman rises up fussily, and bustles round to the dock, where for a minute he seems to be engaged in earnest conversation with the prisoner. The latter shakes his head sullenly and hopelessly. In an apparently highly-excited state, the gentleman, whom I rightly judge to be solicitor for the defence, hurries back, whispers to the barrister, and seems by his gesture to be washing his hands of some responsibility.

What does it all mean? Why do they not go on with the trial? The suspense is growing more than I can bear. Hush! The judge speaks.

The excitement is spreading through the court. In spite of the warning looks of the authorities, people are whispering to each other. The judge is speaking earnestly to the prisoner. He seems to be explaining something, counselling something. Still the man shakes his head sullenly. What does it all mean?

Mean! The next solemn action, the next solemn words of the red-robed judge answer my question, and tell me that a thing has come to pass which never entered within the range of probability. Or have I been asleep? Has the trial been gone through, and the worst, the very worst, happened? No; five minutes ago I pulled Philippa back to her seat, and forced her to withhold her damning words. Even now my grasp is on her to prevent her from rising.

Ha! Look! The judge places a square of black silk upon his head. The prisoner cowers down. He would fall, were it not for the arms which support him on either

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side. A rustle of intense feeling runs through the court. Men catch their breath; women's eyes are distended. The sensation-seekers are rewarded. Hark! The judge speaks. I can hear him plainly now, although there is deep emotion in his voice.

"Prisoner at the bar, you are guilty, by your own confession, of an atrocious, cold-blooded murder, the motive for which is known but to yourself and your God. For me only the painful duty remains—"

Guilty! On his own confession! The man guilty! The man to save whom we have travelled night and day—he the criminal! Philippa, my peerless Philippa! my wife! my love! Innocent! innocent! This—this revulsion of feeling is more than human nature can bear!

"Order in the court! Order in the court!" What is it? Who is it? Only a woman in a dead faint. She is borne out tenderly, lovingly, proudly, by a man who clasps his precious burden to a heart full of such rapture as few of his fellow-creatures can ever have known.

But let it also be hoped that few have ever endured such grief and anguish!

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CHAPTER XVI.

"WHERE ARE THE SNOWS THAT FELL LAST YEAR?"

ALTHOUGH, while engaged in the labor of writing this story, I have many times regretted that I am nothing more than a plain narrator of facts and incidents, not a master of fiction, I think I have not yet felt the regret so strongly as at the moment when I begin this chapter. The sombre acts of the life-drama in which Philippa and I played parts so painful, so full of grief, and even if brightened by a ray of joy, of joy fallacious and of uncertain tenure—these acts I have found little difficulty in describing; I had simply to throw my mind back to the pictures of the past and reproduce them in words. The task, whether well or ill done, was not a hard one.

But now, when in one moment and as if by magic every thing changed; when sorrow seemed to be simply swept out of our lives; when that poor abject wretch's confession of guilt, forced from him in some mysterious way, not only left our whole future bright and cloudless, but consigned to rest all the ghosts of the past, whose shadowy forms had hitherto dogged our steps and denied us the happiness rightly due to those who love as we loved; now it is that I feel my shortcomings acutely, and wish my pen was more powerful than it is.

And yet a word will describe the state of my own mind as, when the last solemn words were spoken by the

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judge—spoken in a voice which showed emotion and distress at being compelled to condemn a fellow-creature to death—I carried my fainting wife from the crowded, reeking court. The momentary sense of rapture passed away; bewilderment, sheer bewilderment, is the word for what was left. I could not think. All my reasoning faculties had left me. In fact, I believe that had Philippa not swooned, and so needed my mechanically given care, I myself should have fallen senseless on that threshold which an hour before we crossed, thinking we were going to endless misery.

I remember this much. As I laid Philippa on one of the hard wooden benches in the stone corridor I kept repeating to myself, "Innocent, my love is innocent; that man is guilty." I suppose this continual reiteration was an endeavor to impress the tremendous fact upon my brain, which for a time was incredulous and refused to entertain it.

I threw up my wife's veil and bathed her face with water, which was brought me by a kindly policeman. Presently her eyes opened, and consciousness returned; she strove to speak.

My presence of mind was fast returning. "Dearest," I whispered, "as you love me, not a word in this place. In a minute we will leave it."

She was obedient; but I knew from the wild look of joy in her eyes that obedience tasked her to the utmost. She was soon able to rise, and then we walked from the court, pushed our way through the crowd who waited in the street, busily discussing the sudden termination to the trial, threw ourselves into a cab, and in another moment were alternately weeping and laughing in each other's arms.

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It was, however, but for a moment. The inn to which we drove was close at hand. There we were shown into a room, and were at last free to give the fullest vent to our pent-up feelings.

It would be absurd for me to attempt to reproduce our words, our disjointed exclamations. It would be sacrilege for me to describe the tears we shed, the embraces, the loving caresses we lavished on each other. Think of us an hour, one short hour ago! Think of us now! The curse laid upon us by that awful night removed forever! Our secret kept, or secrecy, if still advisable, no longer absolutely needful. Philippa, in spite of all I had seen, in spite of all she had told me on that night when I found her, a wild, distracted woman, in a storm the wildest that years have known, guiltless of her husband's death! Innocent not only as she had in my eyes always been, but also, what was far more, innocent in her own eyes!

Small wonder that for nearly an hour we sat with our arms twined around each other, and used few words which were more than rapturous exclamations of love and joy.

There! I cannot, will not describe the scene more fully. I will say no more, except this: when at last we grew calmer, Philippa turned to me, and once more I saw terror gathering in her eyes.

"Basil," she said, "it is true—it must be true?"

"True! of course it is."

"That man, the prisoner, could not have pleaded guilty when he was innocent."

"Why should he? It meant death to him, poor wretch."

"But why did he confess?"

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"Who can tell? Remorse may have urged him to do so."

Philippa rose, and her next words were spoken quickly and with excitement.

"No, I did not do it. The thought, the dream haunted me, but I did not believe it until I heard those men talk of the way he died. Then it all came back to me. The mad storm, the dead man over whom I stood; even then I don't think I actually believed it. It was when you told me how you found me, that I lost all hope."

"Dearest, forgive me. I should have believed in the impossibility of the act even in your delirium, even if I had seen it done. Philippa, say you forgive me."

She threw her arms around me. "Basil, my husband," she whispered, "you have done much for me, do one thing more; find out the whole truth—find out why this man killed him, how he killed him; find out, satisfy me that his confession was a true one; then, Basil, such happiness as I have never even dreamed of will be mine!"

"And mine!" I echoed.

I promised to do as she wished. Indeed, the moment I had recovered my senses, I resolved to learn everything that could be learned. Once and for all I would clear away every cloud of doubt, although that cloud might be no bigger than a man's hand.

But Philippa must not stop in Tewnham. Her strange conduct during the trial, her fainting-fit after it, were bound to have attracted the attention of those present. No doubt she was looked upon as a friend of the prisoner, who was overpowered by the sudden and awful ending to the case. Still, she must not stay at Tewnham.

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We went to London by an afternoon train. The next morning I again ran down to the place at which the trial was held. I ascertained the name of the convict's solicitor, and as soon as I found him at leisure requested the favor of an interview.

I found him apparently a worthy, respectable man, but of a nature inclined to be choleric. I told him I called on him because I was much interested in the case of the convict William Evans. Mr. Crisp, that was his name, frowned and fidgeted about with some papers which were in front of him.

"I would rather not talk about the case," he said sharply. "Nothing for many years has so much annoyed me."

"Why? Your client only met with his deserts."

"True—true. But I am a lawyer, sir. Our province is not to think so much of deserts as of what we can do for a client. It is hard to try and serve a fool."

"No doubt; but I scarcely understand your meaning."

"Meaning! I could have saved that man. There was no evidence to speak of against him. What did it amount to? A pistol of a peculiar make found in a field half a mile away from the scene of the murder; one man who could swear that the pistol was my client's property—a pawnbroker, to whom he wanted to sell it. Positively, sir, that was the whole case for the Crown. Never so disgusted in my life—never!"

The excitable little man's looks showed that his disgust was not assumed.

So the pistol which I had thoughtlessly hurled away had, after all, furnished the clew and brought the criminal to justice. Although I was not quite satisfied that

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the right person was to suffer for the dark crime, I resolved to get all the additional information I could.

"But why did he plead guilty?" I asked.

"Because he was a fool," rapped out Mr. Crisp. "It was like committing suicide. I don't care a button for the man himself; but I confess I was annoyed at seeing my case all knocked to pieces by his obstinacy. I went to him; if you were in court, you no doubt saw me. I begged him to withdraw his plea. I told him I could save him. Yet the fool insisted."

"Did penitence or remorse urge him?"

"I don't know. He could have had more time for penitence and remorse if he had let me save him from the gallows. No; he says, 'It's no good—not a bit of good. You don't know all I know. There's some one in court who knows all about it—saw it all done. She's come to hang me.' I have no idea what he meant."

I started. I knew what the man meant. He, in common with every one else in that court, had turned and looked at Philippa as she rose from her seat and addressed the judge. It was the sight of Philippa that had taken away the wretch's last hope of escape.

"I wash my hands of the fellow, of course," continued Mr. Crisp; "but I did take the trouble to inquire if any witnesses for the prosecution had been allowed to enter the court. I am assured they were all kept in waiting outside."

I sat for some moments in deep thought. The solicitor looked at me, as if he fancied I had already taken up as much of his valuable time as he could spare.

"Is there any way of gaining access to the condemned man?" I said. "Could you, for instance, get an order to see him?"

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"No doubt I could; but I have no object in seeing him."

"I will give you an object," I said. "I want you to see that man, and, if possible, get a written, or at least dictated, confession from him—not of the bald fact that he is guilty, but of all particulars connected with the murder."

Mr. Crisp looked surprised, and expressed his opinion that it was all but impossible to obtain what I wanted.

I had taken rather a fancy to the brisk-spoken, sharp little man. He seemed to me trustworthy; so that, after consideration, I determined to confide to him my reason for making this request. Under the assurance of professional secrecy, I told him briefly so much as I thought fit of Philippa's and my own connection with the events of that night. He listened with an interest which augured well for the reception which awaits the sombre tale I now give to the world. His curiosity seemed excited, and he promised to see the convict, and, if possible, learn all I wanted to know. I left my address, and bade him good-day.

I did not care to linger at Tewnham; so I walked down to the railway-station, intending to return to town by the next train. As I waited on the platform a down-train came in. A sudden impulse seized me. The day was still young. I had time to spare. I crossed the bridge, entered the train, and in a quarter of an hour was at Roding. I went there because I was impelled by a desire to once more visit the actual scene of the beginning of all these troubles.

I walked that road which Sir Mervyn Ferrand had walked that dark night. But oh, how changed everything was! Yet not more changed than our own lives. It was

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a glorious afternoon in September. The rain of the preceding day had left the earth moist and fresh. The fields, on either side of the road, were gleaming with that bright pure emerald which they wear after the ruthless scythe has swept away the ripe grass and the marguerites and other flowers which grow among it; or else they were filled from hedge to hedge with a golden sea of waving corn, or sheaves waiting to be garnered; for the harvest that year was not early. The wild roses were long over, but fragrant honeysuckle and other wild flowers still made gay the hedgerows and banks. The birds had awakened from their August silence, and were singing once more. The great sleepy cows lay under the shade of the trees. The large mows of new hay stood side by side with their dingy-looking, but more valuable, elder brothers. The whole land seemed wrapped in happy autumnal repose. The scene was calm, peaceful, and thoroughly typical of England. So beautiful it was, so full I now felt of love for my native land, that had these pages been then written, I should upon my return home have erased all my glowing description of Seville.

A breath of soft but fresh air came blowing from the far-away downs. I drew in a deep draught; I threw back my shoulders and stood erect. I laughed aloud in my great happiness as a comical picture, familiar to my childhood, of Christian losing his burden, rose before my mind, and seemed to be the exact thing wanted to illustrate my own case. Yes, the burden I had borne had fallen from my back forever!

Ah! here is the spot—the very spot where Sir Mervyn fell. It was here, just under that cluster of ragged-robins, I must have placed his corpse, little thinking that the kind white snow would hide it, and save my love and

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me. Oh, how I prayed in those days that the bitter weather might last; that its iron grip would hold the world fast until Philippa's health and strength returned! It did so, and saved us!

"Where are the snows that fell last year?" Ah! should I not rather sing, "Where is the grief of yesterday?" Gone like the snow. Other snow may fall, other grief may come, but last year's snow and yesterday's grief are gone forever!

Nevertheless, that spot was too suggestive of horrible reminiscences for me to linger long over it. I turned away, and in my great happiness could whisper to myself that I forgave the dead man for the ill he had wrought. May his bones rest in peace! I walked along the road, right on until I came to the cottage in which, like a coward who could not face his troubles, I had spent those aimless, miserable months. It was untenanted. Half defaced auction bills were in the windows and on the doorposts; for some months ago the furniture had been sold. I paused and looked at the window by which Philippa had entered, and felt that since that night I had passed through more grief, passion, fear, hope, and joy than would fill an ordinary lifetime. Then I turned and shook the dust off my feet. Never again would I come within twenty miles of this place.

On the road back, to my annoyance, I encountered Mrs. Wilson. I tried to pass without sign of recognition, but she was too quick for me. She stood in front of me, and I was bound to stop.

She was more haggard, more drawn, more aquiline-looking than ever. Her eyes alone looked young. They at least had spirit and vitality in them. They positively blazed upon me.

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"She did not do it, after all!" she said fiercely.

At first I thought of affecting surprise, and asking her what she meant; but I felt that any attempt at equivoque would be but vain.

"She did not," I answered shortly.

"Fool that I was!" she cried. "Fool, to be led away by an impulse! Why did I tell her? I swear to you Dr. North, that had I not felt sure it was her act, she should never have known. She should have gone to her grave a shamed woman, as I shall go!"

Her look was venom itself.

"Remember," I said sternly, "Lady Ferrand is now my wife. I will not hear her name coupled with yours."

She laughed scornfully. "Your wife! She soon forgot her first love. Why did I speak? I wish my hand had withered before I wrote that letter. Do you know why I wrote it?"

"No; nor do I care."

"I wrote it for vengeance. She had, I thought, served that man as I ought to have served him; but I hated her for it, for I loved him still. So I thought it would be so sweet for her to know that she had killed her husband, and for you, her lover—I knew you were her lover—to know that I could at any moment give her up to justice! I was a fool. Why did that man plead guilty? When I saw your wife rise in court I laughed. I knew what was coming. Now, instead of harming her, I have done her good."

"You have," I said curtly, and turned upon my heel. The malignity of this woman was so intense that I felt thankful she could in no way work Philippa harm.

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A quarter of a mile up the road I turned. Mrs. Wilson, a black spot on a fair scene, was standing gazing after me. I hurried on until a bend in the path hid her from sight. I hurried on back to Philippa and happiness!

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CHAPTER XVII.

CLEAR SKIES.

ALTHOUGH England was now to me and to my wife a land very different from the one we quitted some eight months ago, we were anxious to get back to Seville, if only to set at rest my mother's fears. She, poor woman, as a letter showed, was much exercised as to what manner of business could have made us leave her in so unceremonious a way. The moment the glad truth had become known to me, I had telegraphed, saying that all was well with us, and that we should soon join her. Two things only detained us.

The first was that we wanted the convict's confession. Although Philippa said little on the subject, I knew that until it arrived she would not be quite happy. There was with her a haunting dread that the man, in the hopes of mitigating his sentence, had pleaded guilty to a crime of which he was innocent. Even the accurate account which I gave her of my interview with the solicitor did not quite satisfy her. So we waited impatiently for the full explanation, which might or might not come.

The second thing which kept us in London was this. I determined that before I left I would have the fact that when I married Philippa I married Lady Ferrand fully acknowledged. I found my way to the gentlemen who were winding up the dead man's affairs, and stated

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my case to their incredulous ears. At first they treated me as an impostor.

But not for long. Indeed, my task was half done. They had already, without any assistance from Mrs. Wilson, ferreted out the date and particulars of the death of the first Lady Ferrand. They had but to assure themselves that the marriage-certificate which I laid before them was no forgery, and surrender at discretion.

It was a poor estate, the administrators told me. Sir Mervyn had died intestate. He had during his lifetime made away with nearly all he could alienate. Still, there was some personal property, of which my wife could claim a share, and a certain amount of real property, on which she was entitled to dower. But it was a very poor estate.

I cut them very short. I told them that, let the deceased's wealth be great or little, not one penny-piece of it should soil my wife's fingers. If Sir Mervyn Ferrand's heir was in want of the money, it should, provided he was a different stamp of man from his immediate predecessor, be given to him a free gift. If not, some hospital should be benefited by it. All I wanted was, that it should be clearly understood that Sir Mervyn Ferrand left a widow.

The administrators, one of whom was, by the bye, the heir, evidently looked upon me as a most eccentric personage. Perhaps it was for this reason, or—as I do not wish to cast unmerited blame—perhaps it was because the estate wound up to nothing—well, any way, even to this day we have received no communication, much less remittance, from the administrators; nor, to tell the truth, have I troubled them again. Philippa's marriage admitted, I washed my hands of all the Ferrand brood.

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The confession did not arrive; but I persuaded Philippa to leave England. Mr. Crisp could send whatever he had to send to Seville just as well as to London. So once more, and this time in all but perfect happiness, we took that long journey which was by now quite familiar to us.

The joy, the wild joy, with which Philippa threw herself into my mother's arms checked all the upbraidings and reproach which we apparently merited. Our return was like the return of a prodigal son and daughter. Laughter, tears, and happiness!

Although I told my mother nothing as to the object of our mysterious journey; although she asked me nothing; although no word evidencing her knowledge of what had passed has ever crossed her lips, I know that all has been revealed to her; that Philippa has sobbed out the whole strange tale on her breast. I know it by this, that since the day of our return my mother's deep love for my wife has shown itself even tenderer, sweeter, and deeper. Yes, I was spared the telling of the tale. My mother's eyes the next day showed me that Philippa had given her the history, as I have given it here, from beginning to end.

No, not quite the end. Sit by me once more, as I asked you at the beginning of my story to sit by me; but this time, not by the side of a smouldering fire, but out in the fair, gay *patio* of our Andalusian home. Philippa and I are side by side. The post has just come in, and brought me a bulky packet, on which, in a clerkly hand, is written my name and address. I tear the wrapper open with eagerness. I know what it contains; Philippa knows. I wish to read it first alone, but the appealing look in her eyes turns me from my purpose. After all, there is

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nothing to fear, there can be nothing which she should not know. So, with our cheeks all but touching, we read together. Sit by us, lean over my shoulder, and read with us.

"The confession of William Evans, now lying in Tewnham jail under sentence of death:

"On the fifth of January, this year, I returned from New Zealand. I worked my passage home. When I reached London I had but a few shillings in my pocket. I had no articles of value which I could sell. All I owned, except my clothes and the little bit of money, was a pistol which a man on board the ship had given me. It was a pistol of his own invention. He had several with him, and said he wanted to get the sort known. Why he gave it to me God knows; but he did, and a couple of cartridges.

"I spent my money—all but a shilling or two. I tried to get work, but none was to be had. Then I remembered that I once had a friend who lived near Roding. I went there by train. I had just enough money to pay my fare. I found that the man I knew had left the place two years ago. I walked back to the town penniless and desperate.

"The first thing I did was to go to the pawnbroker's, and try and sell the pistol. The man wouldn't buy it at any price. He said his shop was full of pistols. I went away, and walked to the railway station to try and earn a few pence somehow. I was in despair—all but starving.

"About seven o'clock the train from London came in. A tall gentleman came out of the door of the station. I asked him if he had any luggage I could carry for him. He told me to be off. Then I asked him, for pity's sake,

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to give me a shilling to buy some food. He cursed me, and I began to hate him.

"He stood under the gas-lamp and drew out a great gold watch and looked at the time. Then he asked a man near which road he must take to get to a village named Cherwell. The man told him. I saw him walk away, and I knew where he was going.

"I shall be hanged next week; there is no hope for me. But I tell the truth when I say that, bad fellow as I have been, I had never committed such a crime as the one which at that moment entered my head. That tall man had money, jewelry, and good clothing; I had nothing. I was starving. So I ran on, got before him, went miles up the road, and sat down in the bitter cold on a heap of stones, waiting for him to come, and making up my mind to kill and rob him. I knew I must kill him, because he was so much stronger and bigger than I was. My pistol was loaded.

"He came. I saw him in the moonlight. I stood up as he came near and, God forgive me, pulled the trigger, and shot him through the heart. He fell like a stone, and I knew I was a murderer.

"Oh, if I could I would have undone the deed! I stood for a long time before I dared to go to the body and steal the things for which I had committed the crime. Then I nerved myself and went to take the price for which, unless God is merciful, I had sold my soul.

"I never took a farthing. Just as I was about to begin I heard the sound of feet. I looked up, and saw a woman or a spirit coming to me. I dropped the pistol in terror. I felt sure she saw me. I looked at her under the moon. Her face was white, her lips were moving, her hair was all flying about. She came straight to

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where the dead man lay, then stopped and wrung her hands. I fled away in deadly fear. I ran across several fields. I dared not stop. I thought that spirit or ghost was following me.

"I ran on until the snow began. I must have died in that snow-storm if I had not found a half-roofed cowshed. I crept into this, and lay all the night and part of the next day. I was the most wretched being in the world.

"Hunger at last drove me out. I got through the snow somehow, and reached a house, where the people saved me from dying of starvation. But nothing could make me go again to the spot where I had done the murder. My life since then has been one of agony. Even now that I am going to be hanged I am happier than I have felt for months. May God forgive my crime!

"I pleaded guilty at the trial because I turned round in the dock, and saw the woman who I thought was a spirit standing up and ready to denounce me to the judge. I knew that she saw me that night, and I was bound to be found guilty.

"I have confessed all. Every word of this is truth. As I hope for mercy, it is all true!

"WILLIAM EVANS.

"P. S.—I took the above confession down from the prisoner's dictation. It should be all you want. The man seems thoroughly penitent, but I do not trouble you with his expressions of remorse and regret.

"I remain, dear sir, yours faithfully,

"STEPHEN CRISP."

We read the last lines; the paper fluttered down from our hands; we turned to each other. Tears of deep thankfulness were in my wife's sweet eyes. Down to

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the smallest detail, the wretched man's confession made everything clear. Nothing was left unexplained, except, perhaps, the motive which induced Philippa to go that night to meet her would-be betrayer once more. This we shall never know, but her temporary madness may amply account for it. We need seek no further; the faintest doubt as to her own perfect innocence is removed from my wife's mind. Hand in hand, heart to heart, lip to lip, we can stand, and feel that our troubles are at last over.

Our troubles over! Shall those words be the last I write? No, one scene more—the scene that lies before me even now.

An English home. Outside, green shaven lawns, trim paths, and fine old trees. Inside, the comfort and the peace which make an English home the sweetest in the world. For when the need was gone; when sunny Spain no longer was for us the one safe land, its charms diminished, and we pined to see once more England's fair fields and ruddy honest faces. So back we came, and made ourselves a home, far, far away from every spot the sight of which might wake sad thoughts. And here we live, and shall live till that hour when one of us must kiss the other's clay-cold brow, and know that death has parted those whom naught but death could part.

Look out; look through this shaded window. There she sits, my wife; a tall son at her side, fair daughters near her. Years, many years have passed, but left no lines upon her brow; brought no white threads to streak that raven hair. The rich bright beauty of the girl is still her own. To me, now as of yore, the sweetest, fairest woman in the world!

The children see me as I gaze with thoughtful happy

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eyes upon that group beneath the trees. They call and beckon me. My wife looks up; her eyes meet mine, just raised from these sad pages. Ah! love, sweet love, in those dear eyes what was it once my fate to read? Shame, sorrow, dread, despair, and love. All these, save love, have vanished long ago; and as I turn to pen these lines—the last—that look of calm, assured, unclouded joy keeps with me, telling me that from her life has passed even the very memory of those dark, dark days!

THE END.

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THE FLOWERS' WORK

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN

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THE FLOWERS' WORK

"SEE, mother! I've finished my bouquet. Isn't it beautiful? More so, I think, than those made by the florist which he asked two dollars for, and this has cost me but seventy-five cents."

"Yes, yes, it is very pretty. But, dear me, child, I cannot help thinking how illy we can spare so much for such a very useless thing. Almost as much as you can make in a day it has cost."

"Don't say *useless*, mother. It will express to Edward our appreciation of his exertions and their result, and our regards. How he has struggled to obtain a profession! I only wish I could cover the platform with bouquets, baskets and wreaths tonight, when he receives his diploma."

"Well, well; if it will do any good, I shall not mind the expense. But, child, he will know it is from you, and men don't care for such things coming from home folks. Now, if it was from any other young lady, I expect he'd be mightily pleased."

"Oh, mother, I don't think so. Edward will think as much of it, coming from his sister-in-law, as from any other girl. And it will please Kate, too. If *we* do not think enough of him to send him bouquets, who else could? Rest easy, mother, dear; I feel

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quite sure my bouquet will do much good," answered Annie, putting her bouquet in a glass of water.

She left the room to make her simple toilet for the evening.

Mrs. Grey had been widowed when her two little girls were in their infancy. It had been a hard struggle for the mother to raise her children. Constant toil, privation and anxiety had worn heavily on her naturally delicate constitution, until she had become a confirmed invalid. But there was no longer a necessity for her toiling. Katy, the elder daughter, was married; and Annie, a loving, devoted girl, could now return the mother's long and loving care. By her needle she obtained a support for herself and mother.

Katy's husband held a position under the government, receiving a small compensation, only sufficient for the necessities of the present, and of very uncertain continuance. He was ambitious of doing better than this for himself, as well as his family. So he employed every spare hour in studying medicine, and it was the night that he was to receive his diploma that my little story begins.

The exercises of the evening were concluded. Edward Roberts came down the aisle to where his wife and Annie were seated, bearing his flowers — an elegant basket, tastefully arranged, and a beautiful bouquet. But it needed only a quick glance for Annie to see it was not *her* bouquet. Although the flowers were fragrant and rare, they were not so carefully selected or well chosen. Hers expressed not alone her affection and appreciation, but *his* energy, perseverance and success.

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"Why, where is my bouquet? I do not see it," asked Annie, a look of disappointment on her usually bright face.

"Yours? I do not know. Did you send me one?" returned her brother-in-law.

"Indeed I did. And such a beauty, too! It is too bad! I suppose it is the result of the stupidity of the young man in whose hands I placed it. I told him plain enough it was for you, and your name, with mine, was on the card," answered Annie, really very much provoked.

"Well, do not fret, little sister; I am just as much obliged; and perchance some poor fellow not so fortunate as I may have received it," answered Edward Roberts.

"Don't, for pity's sake, let mother know of the mistake, or whatever it is, that has robbed you of your bouquet. She will fret dreadfully about it," said Annie.

All that night, until she was lost in sleep, did she constantly repeat:

"I wonder who has got it?"

She had failed to observe on the list of graduates the name of *Edgar Roberts*, from Ohio, or she might have had an idea into whose hands her bouquet had fallen. Her brother Edward, immediately on hearing Annie's exclamation, thought how the mistake had occurred, and was really glad that it was as it was; for the young man whose name was so nearly like his own was a stranger in the city, and Edward had noticed his receiving *one* bouquet only, which of course was the missing one, and Annie's.

Edgar Roberts sat in his room that night, after his

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return from the distribution of diplomas, holding in his hand Annie's bouquet, and on the table beside him was a floral dictionary. An expression of gratification was on his pleasant face, and, as again and again his eyes turned from the flowers to seek their interpreter, his lips were wreathed with smiles, and he murmured low:

"Annie Grey! Sweet Annie Grey! I never dreamed of any one in this place knowing or caring enough for me to send such a tribute. How carefully these flowers are chosen! What a charming, appreciative little girl she is! Pretty, I know, of course. I wonder how she came to send me this? How shall I find her? Find her I must, and know her."

And Edgar Roberts fell asleep to dream of Annie Grey, and awoke in the morning whispering the last words of the night before:

"Sweet Annie Grey!"

During the day he found it quite impossible to fix his mind on his work; mind and heart were both occupied with thoughts of Annie Grey. And so it continued to be until Edgar Roberts was really in love with a girl he knew not, nor had ever seen. To find her was his fixed determination. But how delicately he must go about it. He could not make inquiry among his gentlemen acquaintances without speculations arising, and a name sacred to him then, passed from one to another, lightly spoken, perhaps. Then he bethought himself of the city directory; he would consult that. And so doing he found Greys innumerable — some in elegant, spacious dwellings, some in the business thoroughfares of the place. The young ladies of the first mentioned, he thought, living in

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fashionable life, surrounded by many admirers, would scarcely think of bestowing any token of regard or appreciation on a poor unknown student. The next would have but little time to devote to such things; and time and thought were both spent in the arrangement of his bouquet. Among the long list of Greys he found one that attracted him more than all the others — a widow, living in a quiet part of the city, quite near his daily route. So he sought and found the place and exact number. Fortune favored him. Standing at the door of a neat little frame cottage he beheld a young girl talking with two little children. She was not the blue-eyed, golden-haired girl of his dreams, but a sweet, earnest dove-eyed darling. And what care he, whether her eyes were blue or brown, if her name were only Annie? Oh, how could he find out that?

She was bidding the little ones "good-bye." They were off from her, on the sidewalk, when the elder child — a bright, laughing boy of five — sang out, kissing his little dimpled hand:

"Good-bye, Annie, darling!"

Edgar Roberts felt as if he would like to clasp the little fellow to the heart he had relieved of all anxiety. No longer a doubt was in his mind. He had found his Annie Grey.

From that afternoon, twice every day he passed the cottage of the widow Grey, frequently seeing sweet Annie. This, however, was his only reward. She never seemed at all conscious of his presence. Often her eyes would glance carelessly toward him. Oftener they were never raised from her work. Sewing by the window, she always was.

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What next? How to proceed, on his fixed determination of winning her, if possible?

Another bright thought. He felt pretty sure she attended church somewhere; perhaps had a class in the Sabbath school. So the next Sunday morning, at an early hour, he was commanding a view of Annie's home. When the school bells commenced to ring, he grew very anxious. A few moments, and the door opened and the object of his thoughts stepped forth. How beautiful she looked in her pretty white suit! Now Edgar felt his cause was in the ascendancy. Some distance behind, and on the other side of the street, he followed, ever keeping her in view until he saw her enter a not far distant church. Every Sunday after found him an attentive listener to the Rev. Mr. Ashton, who soon became aware of the presence of the young gentleman so regularly, and apparently so much interested in the services. So the good man sought an opportunity to speak to Edgar, and urge his accepting a charge in the Sabbath school. We can imagine Edgar needed no great urging on that subject; so, frequently, he stood near his Annie. In the library, while selecting books for their pupils, once or twice they had met, and he had handed to her the volume for which her hand was raised. Of course a smile and bow of acknowledgment and thanks rewarded him.

Edgar was growing happier, and more confident of final success every week, when an event came which promised a speedy removal of all difficulty in his path. The school was going to have a picnic. Then and there he would certainly have an introduction to Annie, and after spending a whole day with her, he

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would accompany her home and win the privilege of calling often.

The day of the picnic dawned brightly, and the happy party gathered on the deck of the steamer. The first person who met Edgar Roberts' eye was his fellow-student, Edward Roberts. Standing beside him were two ladies and some children. When Edgar hastened up to speak to his friend, the ladies turned, and Edward presented:

"My wife; my sister, Miss Grey."

Edgar Roberts could scarcely suppress an exclamation of joy and surprise. His looks fully expressed how delighted he was.

Three months had he been striving for this, which, if he had only known it, could have been obtained so easily through his friend and her brother. But what was so difficult to win was the more highly prized. What a happy day it was!

Annie was all he had believed her — charming in every way. Edgar made a confidant of his friend; told him what Edward well knew before, but was wise enough not to explain the mistake — of his hopes and fears; and won from the prudent brother the promise to help him all he could.

Accompanying Annie home that evening, and gaining her permission for him to call again, Edgar lost no time in doing so, and often repeated the call.

Perhaps Annie thought him very fast in his wooing, and precipitate in declaring his love, when, after only a fortnight visiting her, he said:

"Annie, do you like me well enough, and trust in me sufficiently, to allow me to ask your mother to call me her son?"

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Either so happy or so surprised was Annie, that she could not speak just then. But roses crowded over her fair face, and she did not try to withdraw the hand he had clasped.

"Say, Annie, love," he whispered. She raised her eyes to his with such a strange, surprised look in them, that he laughed and said:

"You think I am very hasty, Annie. You don't know how long I've loved you, and have waited for this hour."

"Long!—two weeks," she said.

"Why, Annie, darling, it is over three months since I've been able to think of anything save Annie Grey—ever since the night I received my diploma, and your sweet, encouraging bouquet. Since that night I've known and loved you. And how I've worked for this hour!"

And then he told her how it was. And when he had finished, she looked at him, her eyes dancing merrily, and though she tried hard to keep the little rosebud of a mouth demurely shut, it was no use — it would open and let escape a rippling laugh, as she said:

"And this is the work my bouquet went about, is it? This is the good it has done me—" She hesitated; the roses deepened their color as she continued: "And you—"

"Yes, Annie, it has done much good to me, and I hope to you too."

"But, Edgar—" it was the first time she had called him thus, and how happy it made him—"I must tell you the truth — I never sent you a bouquet!"

"No! oh, do not say so. Can there be another such Annie Grey?"

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"No; I am the one who sent the bouquet; but, Edgar, you received it through a mistake. It was intended for my brother-in-law, Edward!"

"Stop, Annie, a moment—Are you sorry that mistake was made? Do you regret it?" said Edgar, his voice filled with emotion.

"No indeed. I am very glad you received it instead," Annie ingenuously replied; adding quickly, "But, please, do not tell Edward I said so."

"No, no; I will not tell him that you care a little more for *Edgar* than *Edward*. Is that it? May I think so, Annie?"

She nodded her head, and he caught her to his heart, whispering:

"Mine at last. My Annie, darling! What a blessed mistake it was! May I go to your mother, Annie?"

"Yes; and I'll go with you, Edgar, and hear if she will admit those flowers did any good. She thought it a useless expenditure."

The widow Grey had become very much attached to the kind, attentive young man, and when he came with Annie, and asked her blessing on their love, she gave it willingly; and after hearing all about the way it happened, she said:

"Never did flowers such a good work before. They carried Edgar to church, made a Christian of him, and won for Annie a good, devoted husband, and for me an affectionate son."

THE END.

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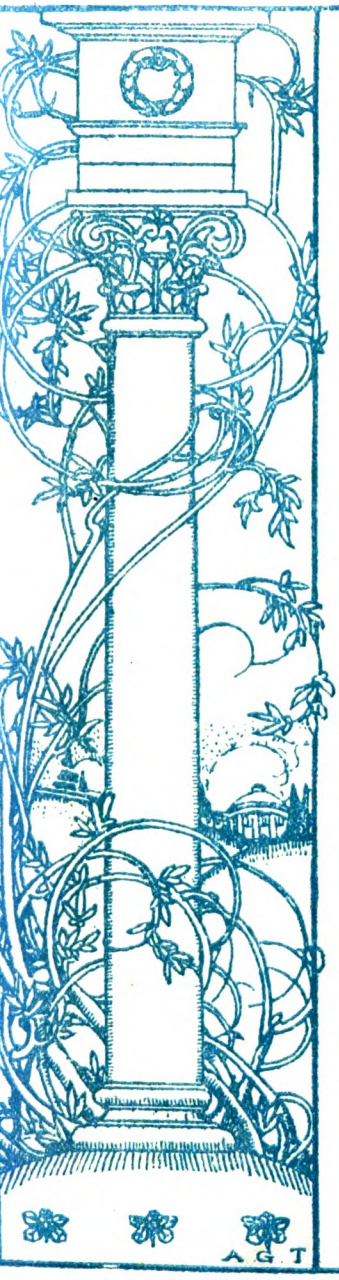

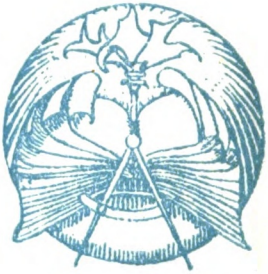

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